The Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Young Sikh Adults

An ethnographic study of the discourses and narratives of parents, teachers and adults in one London school

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores how future educational and occupational aspirations are constructed by young Sikh adults. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten young Sikh adults, both their parents, and their teachers at one school in West London to investigate how future aspirations are constructed, which resources are employed, and why certain resources are used over others.

In some previous research on aspirations and future choices, Sikhs have either been ignored or, instead, subsumed under the umbrella category of 'Asian' and this study seeks to address this. Furthermore, the study seeks to shed light on how British-Sikh identities are constructed and intersected by social class, caste and gender. This is important to explore since it can have an impact upon how young adults are structured by educational policy.

A 'syncretic' social constructionist framework which predominantly draws upon Pierre Bourdieu's notions of habitus, capital and field, along with the cultural identity theories of Avtar Brah and Stuart Hall, is employed to investigate the construction of identities and aspirations. In addition, the study contains ethnographical elements as it is conducted on my 'own' Sikh group and at my former secondary school. Consequently, I brought a set of assumptions to the research which, rather than disregard, I acknowledge since they highlight how I come to form certain interpretations of phenomena over others.

Keywords: Education, Occupation, Aspirations, Young Sikhs, Social Class, Caste, Gender, Discourse, Ethnography, Auto-Ethnography

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the construction of educational and occupational aspirations for Sikh young adults in one school in West London, attempting to examine some of the resources, both social and cultural, that they draw upon when constructing their choices. In this thesis, an aspiration is considered as a particular goal or objective that an individual hopes to achieve. Although holding an aspiration does not immediately lead to a definite choice, since they are fluid and change over time, aspirations are important to study as they narrow a student's future educational and occupational options, indicating possible routes they may undertake (Hutchings, 2007). Furthermore, through exploring aspirations, it is possible to investigate how young adults construct their identities – the construction of certain identities can structure options open to young adults, allowing and constraining certain what they are able to do in the future, and social class, gender, ethnicity and caste can intersect the process and have a role to play (Basit, 1997a).

There are several claims to originality in this study. Firstly, it contributes to knowledge concerning the occupational and educational aspirations of British-Sikh students, neglected in other research which has subsumed them under the category of 'Asian', thereby rendering them invisible. Here, students' parents and principal teachers are included in the research in order to understand the role they have to play in these crucial future decisions and choices; an important area since they are both likely to have knowledge about the young adults' aspirations and be a source of advice and support. Importantly, the impact of caste, gender, social class, area of origin and

generational differences are examined to help to convey the heterogeneity of Sikhs. The different migratory patterns of Sikhs to the UK, from both East Africa and India, highlighted their different social classes and castes and had an impact upon the social and cultural resources which they were able to draw upon to help with their children's future decisions. The Sikhs in this study had to negotiate through these differences, not only when constructing aspirations, but also when constructing forms of identity which could allow certain options to be considered, and rejecting others.

Additional claims to originality stem from the novel 'syncretic' approach I adopt to investigate the constructions of aspirations and youth identity. This approach, a synthesis of a range of theoretical perspectives based within a broad social constructionist position, loosely draws upon some aspects of discursive psychology and Foucault, although there is a greater focus on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, and the cultural identity theories of Stuart Hall and Avtar Brah. Taking such an approach, which has not previously been employed in the study of British-Sikhs, is unique, and allowed an investigation of the different social and cultural resources middle-class and working-class students and families in this sample used when constructing their aspirations, and locating them within a broader political and educational context. Furthermore, this 'syncretic' approach includes cultural nuances, including how notions of 'izzat' or family honour could be seen as a search for 'respectability' (Skeggs, 1997, 2004), a form of symbolic capital located within cultural practices, permitting the family a certain elevated, or diminished, status within the wider community,

particularly important when considering future choices for females, prohibiting those which could compromise ‘izzat’. Thus, ‘izzat’ could also be important for feminine identities, an idea extended by some young men whose accounts varied from constructing women positively, to those that were sexist, stressing how perceived promiscuity could be especially detrimental. Theorisations of ‘hegemonic’ (Connell, 1995) masculinity were especially important in constructions of masculinity. Such forms of ‘dominant’ masculinity, where ‘sporty’ or ‘sexual’ performances are privileged over academic performance, can provide young men with a source of cultural capital within their peer group, opposing academic achievement, influencing the constructions of both identity and future choices, and limiting their future options**.** As such, forms of gender identity, particularly if culturally located, could act as a form of structure over future routes for young adults.

Identities were also constructed in terms of religious and cultural frameworks and a further significant contribution to knowledge stems from an examination of a ‘British-Sikh’ youth identity. Constructions by young adults varied according to context; some were narrower, defined in terms of the five physical symbols Sikhs wear, to others which constructed Sikhs in broader terms.

There was an ethnographic element to this study since I was studying my ‘own’ Sikh group at my former secondary school, which I had to acknowledge and account for since I brought particular assumptions to the research. Through using reflexivity, I was able to do this and explore subject-positions

constructed by both myself and participants, which were intersected and interwoven by gender, social class and caste, and how these positions were accepted, adopted and resisted. This added extra dimension to the study had an impact upon how interpretations were formed, and subsequent data was analysed.

This research study was conducted during the early 2000s and, here, a primary concern of the New Labour government's agenda was a commitment to education, social justice and inclusion and a key method of accomplishing this was through widening participation to university. Described as a 'Third Way' of politics by Tony Blair (1998) for breaking away with past policies of both the political left and right, there was an increased focus on raising achievement within those groups which had traditionally underachieved and been underrepresented within Higher Education. Solely raising attainment was not enough; there was also an increased emphasis on raising aspirations and self-esteem of such groups and several initiatives were developed, including the 'AimHigher' programme, to help those from disadvantaged and 'non-traditional' backgrounds succeed. This initiative was significant; it was within this framework that aspirations were constructed by the young adults, parents and teachers in this study. However, a number of criticisms of the scheme was evident, including how some working-class students and parents were constructed against the middle-class ideal unofficially favoured in this initiative, and for lacking the necessary capital to effectively interact with the education system, thus deflecting attention away from an acknowledgement of problems inherent within the system itself. Furthermore, there was a lack of attention placed on the identities of young

adults and the impact these could have on the construction of future aspirations, and, consequently, these policies were found to be lacking. Importantly, as Thomas (2001) suggests, the policies have been found to be selective, focusing on those students who demonstrate the potential to enter Higher Education, rather than on all disadvantaged young adults. Consequently, AimHigher can be seen as constructing different identities for different young adults, acting as a form of structure over their future aspirations, limiting agency, allowing certain options for some young adults, and prohibiting others – issues which were certainly relevant for participants in this study.

Considerable research already exists on the various options and pathways open to young adults after post-16 compulsory education ends (e.g. Ball et al, 2000; Hodkinson, 1995; Lynn et al, 2000; Hodkinson et al, 1996; Meadows, 2001; Ball et al, 1998; Foskett and Hesketh, 1996; Hanafin and Lynch, 2002; Crozier, 2000; Foskett and Helmsley-Brown, 1999). Where there is greater scope for research, however, is an understanding of the reasons for the aspirations that young people make, what they are constructed alongside, who contributes to the decisions, and why certain options are favoured over others. There is also a dearth of research on the topic of young Sikhs and their aspirations. Some research on 'Asian' young adults and their future decisions has had a tendency to categorise all the various groups under a single, monolithic category, without due reference to how these groups can vary according to language, caste system and social class (e.g. Dosanjh and Ghuman, 1997; Lightbody *et al* 1996; Penn and

Scattergood, 1992). Consequently, explorations of Sikh young adults have largely been rendered invisible through the representation of 'Asians' as a homogeneous and unitary group. Such differences can be important; different groups will draw upon each of these, including caste and social class, in a variety of ways. Thus, a rationale for studying Sikhs was that I felt there are too many fundamental differences between the various South Asian groups to conduct a meaningful piece of research into all South Asians with such a small sample. However, the lack of research on Sikh groups means that research relating to 'Asians' as a whole has to be drawn upon here, and some similarities exist which effect all Asian groups. Furthermore, parents and teachers have been notable absentees in some earlier research on various 'Asian' pupils (Tanna, 1990; Thornley and Siann, 1992) and have been considered as two of the most important groups when these 'Asian' young adults construct their aspirations (Basit, 1996; Ghuman, 2001; Abbas, 2002), and this study seeks to readdress this issue.

Some earlier research concerning the future choices of young adults has been quantitative, focusing either on uncovering a series of fixed, easily discernible stages which people progress through (Ginzberg et al, 1951) or, instead, 'matching' individuals' personalities to a particular type of career (Super, 1963) or work environment (Holland, 1985). Similar essentialist explanations have also been offered to describe how 'Asians' are suffering from being caught up between two discordant cultures (e.g. Ghuman, 1999; Ghuman, 2002), how conflicts/tensions arise between young adults and their parents (e.g. Drury, 1991), and how this extends to their education and

career choices insofar as certain routes are favoured over others (e.g. Bhatti, 1999) which has led to stereotypical views of Asians, particularly those that consider them as having extremely high aspirations for their children. I consider such explanations very narrow, failing to account for social and cultural differences between individuals and groups.

More recent quantitative research has employed larger sample sizes to explore different identities which can have an impact upon aspirations (e.g. Connor et al, 2004; DeWitt et al, 2010; Strand, 2007). Although this research is considered useful, shedding light on the impact of social class, gender and ethnicity on young adults' futures, further qualitative research is required to provide more in-depth data, delving into the complexities of these processes, especially for Sikhs, and how cultural nuances can have a role to play on the construction of identities.

As such, the theoretical basis of this study adopts a broad 'syncretic' social constructionist perspective; a synthesis of several different perspectives, drawing partially on a broad social constructionist (Burr, 1995), where there is a focus on how language is used for constructing the world (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter and Wetherell, 1992), and how power can infuse any interaction, shaping constructions (Foucault, 1972, 1976, 1979). However, I also take a broader social constructionist perspective in this thesis, moving beyond discursive psychology and Foucauldian notions of power, to draw upon various other theoretical positions which formed a greater part of my approach. Pierre Bourdieu's (1985, 1989, 1992) concepts of habitus, field

and capital are heavily drawn upon in this study. Capitals, acting as a form of social and cultural resources, are framed within the habitus of individuals, how they view the world. Both habitus and capitals are required when individuals act in different social fields, opening certain avenues for individuals, limiting others, and, thus, possessing the 'right form of capital can be important, functioning as a source of power.

There are contradictions inherent with drawing upon both Bourdieu and Foucault; their different theoretical standpoints to explore social phenomena considered as incongruous with each other particularly when considering the impact of structure and agency on individuals within society. Foucault theorises power acting as a disciplinary force, permeating throughout all forms of society, functioning extraneous to agency or structure, allowing certain forms of behaviour and constraining others as "domains of objects and rituals of truth" (Foucault, 1979: 194) are produced. Bourdieu differs to Foucault both in conceptualisations of structure and agency, and how power has an impact on individuals and within society. He attempts to bridge the subject (individual) and object (society) divide through exploring the social construction of objective structures and how they impact upon, and constrain, individual's perceptions, actions and constructions. Importantly, one of these structures is social class which I consider particularly important as it allows a range of resources to be drawn upon and, as such, Bourdieu is foregrounded in this thesis. Although there is greater emphasis on structure in Bourdieu's theorisation as opposed to Foucault, there is still the potential for individual agency within these structured forms of behaviour. Furthermore, as opposed

to Foucault who focuses on how power functions in society and its purpose, Bourdieu theorises power as a construct, culturally and symbolically created and legitimised, and, through the constant interplay of agency and structure, it assumes a 'symbolic' form which is internalised into the habitus of the individual. Therefore, Bourdieu places greater emphasis on *who* has power and *how* they employ it, through which certain forms of behaviour (or in the case of this study, future aspirations) are legitimated, and others marginalised. However, the same cultural, social and symbolic capitals are not available to all; race, gender, ethnicity, religion and social class can all have an impact upon the habitus of individuals, and the subsequent resources they are able to draw upon when constructing future choices and identities.

It is here that I find the seminal ideas of Stuart Hall (1990, 1996, 2000), and his notions of 'being' and 'becoming', and Avtar Brah (1996) and her concept of the 'diaspora space', particularly useful. Extending Foucault's notion of power and how it infuses any interaction, Brah and Hall both explore how identities are in a state of flux rather than static, and defined alongside, and against, other members in society. Their ideas allow an exploration of the range of subject-positions which individuals are available to construct, which are context based, including the social, historical, cultural and the educational, having an impact upon which resources they are able to draw upon when constructing identities and aspirations. Although Brah and Hall are located within a different theoretical standpoint, I consider their ideas as complementing those of Bourdieu, permitting an explanation of how, and

why, young adults' habitus and identities, although sharing points of references with their parents, shift and transform, allowing newer forms of identity to be produced, alongside and against other members of the diaspora space.

Compared with Foucault, who argued that identities did not have a fundamental 'essence' which could be uncovered, both Brah and Hall consider identity as having an essential quality. Whilst this allows members from a social and cultural group to identify with each other, they also focus on diaspora to emphasise how identities are in a state of flux, can be located both locally and globally, and positioned historically, all of which can have a bearing upon the various subject-positions available to individuals and the forms of identity they construct. Thus, incorporating Hall and Brah into my 'syncretic' constructionist approach complements other theoretical standpoints I draw upon, allowing an exploration of how power infuses subject positions which are intersected by race, ethnicity, social class, gender and caste, and varying according to social and cultural contexts. Indeed, through exploring how these 'macro' issues have an impact upon the resources drawn upon by the individuals, it was possible to explore how their 'beings' and 'becomings' were both similar and varied, highlighting the fluidity and adaptability of their habitus. In this study, when young adults were deciding future choices, agency was limited through structures in educational policy, as well as through their habitus and the construction of various identities.

Moreover, as part of my 'syncretic' approach, I draw upon other theorists who have been influenced by both Bourdieu and Foucault to explore gendered identities and supplement their ideas for Sikh students in this study. Skeggs' (1997, 2004) research on working-class women's search for 'respectability' was found to be useful; although the young women in her study distanced themselves from hegemonic forms of femininity associated with the middle-class, they sought to gain 'respectability' through their careers. The search for 'respectability' was relevant in this study, evident in the accounts of both young adults and their parents, functioning as a form of symbolic capital, particularly when concerning gender. Certain future careers, particularly those that were considered 'non-traditional', such as within the Arts or Media, could compromise the 'izzat', or family honour, within the local community; this was especially important with the future aspirations of young women for whom 'izzat' structured which options could be considered, and those that could not.

In addition, I drew upon other research on the construction of gender identities. Butler's (1990, 1993, 1997, 2004) research on the 'performativity' of gender identities, drawing upon Foucault, was considered useful, emphasising how gendered forms of 'acting' were produced according to particular social and cultural contexts. Each performance was infused with negotiations of power, defining appropriate ways of behaviour, and prohibiting others. Furthermore, Connell's (1995) theorisation of 'hegemonic', or dominant, masculinity was pertinent, stressing how some forms of masculinity are privileged over others in certain settings. Here, demonstrating

hegemonic forms of masculinity, where women could be denigrated, could function as a form of cultural capital which, if performed successfully, could increase the symbolic capital the young man held amongst his peers. Consequently, these ideas were useful in explaining how students gained, and lost, symbolic, social and cultural capital from behaving in a certain way in particular settings, and these could be important when constructing aspirations; certain forms of gender identity, such as those concerning 'hegemonic' forms of masculinity, placed greater importance on the maintenance of peer group membership which took precedence over academic achievement. As such, some forms of identity could restrict future options as they could be constructed as incompatible with academic success by teachers responsible for selecting students for the AimHigher programme.

Rather than these various theoretical positions simply complementing each other, adopting different epistemological positions will invariably mean that contradictions and tensions are present, particularly those concerning understanding and analysis at the macro- and micro-level, which cannot always be resolved. However, I draw upon Weiss and Wodak (2003) who argue that "when mutual questioning across disciplines becomes possible, the rigid conceptual frameworks of each discipline are likely to be challenged" which will permit "more subtle conceptual hybridizations, eventually more appropriate for dealing with the complex phenomena" (Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 152). Thus, through drawing upon several different theoretical perspectives, I can consider the various limitations of individual standpoints,

whilst simultaneously exploring a greater understanding of the constructions of aspirations and identity of young British-Sikhs.

Taking the above literature into consideration, and the gaps evident in existing knowledge, I decided upon one principal research question - 'What are the educational and occupational aspirations of Sikh young adults?' This was supplemented by several research aims in this thesis:

1) Explore how educational and occupational aspirations are interrelated?
2) Explore which resources do Sikh parents, young adults, and their teachers draw upon when constructing such aspirations and why are certain resources used over others?
3) Explore how aspirations are constructed within each cluster of parent, teacher and young adult?
4) Shed some light upon how some British-Sikh identities are constructed.
5) Examine the stereotypical view of 'Asian' parents as having unrealistically high aspirations for their children.

To investigate these aims, I required a method that would reflect my theoretical standpoint and I decided to employ qualitative, semi-structured interviews with a sample of ten Sikh students, their parents, their principal teachers, both their Heads of Year, and their careers teacher from one school in the West London region. In total, 43 interviews were conducted. This school was chosen because of the higher proportion of Sikh students which I hoped would allow me to easily acquire a sample. Eight young male

students (six working-class and two middle-class) participated as well as two young females (one working-class and one middle-class). Students' social class was identified through their parents' occupation (whichever parent was higher) using government social stratification tables. Furthermore, from the ten sets of parents, six had migrated from India (five working-class and one middle-class) and two from East Africa (both middle-class). Parents from the remaining two sets (both working-class) had different migratory patterns, with both mothers from East Africa and fathers from India. This sample was chosen to gain in-depth, fine-grained data of the resources participants adopted in their constructions of future aspirations compared with a larger sample. Interview schedules were designed for semi-structured, qualitative interviews which were conducted with all participants, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, which were then transcribed and analysed using my 'syncretic' constructionist approach. Although I did employ some analytical tools associated with discursive psychology for analysis, including 'face' and 'politeness' strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987), I predominantly drew upon Bourdieu's notion of habitus, capital and field and Hall and Brah's theorisations of identity construction, which can be considered a 'top-down' approach to analysis.

There were two idiosyncrasies particular to this study which had a bearing upon the research, adding an ethnographic element. The first, that the school in question was my former secondary school, meant that I was approaching the setting and the teachers, some of whom had taught me, with particular assumptions. The second, that I am also a 'Sikh', meant I shared certain

commonalities with the young Sikhs and their parents, giving me an 'insider' status, and although this did not guarantee more meaningful data, it did mean that I had certain assumptions which I would have to acknowledge as it had a significant impact upon how identities were constructed, by both participants and myself, and, also, on how and why I formed certain interpretations of behaviour. However, being an 'insider' did allow me to gain a greater understanding of certain cultural nuances which perhaps would not have been permissible with an 'outsider' status. In this way, there was also an ethnographic aspect which I had to acknowledge since the assumptions I brought had a significant impact upon how I interpreted and analysed the data. Through using reflexivity, I was able to do this, thereby situating myself within the research and bringing greater transparency to the process, including how I was an intrinsic part in the production of data, from deciding upon research questions, to interpreting and writing results.

THESIS STRUCTURE

There are six further chapters to this thesis. The first chapter, the first of two literature review chapters, explores research on 'Asians' and Sikhs. Research on Asians as a whole is drawn upon due to the lack of research on Sikhs. Here, I first explore Sikh migration to the UK, which helps to place the construction of aspirations within a socio-cultural and historical context, before considering some government initiatives on aspirations and widening participation from when this study was conducted. Next, research on 'Asian' students, including the role their parents play in the construction of their aspirations, is explored alongside configurations of social class and gender.

Also, Skegg's (1997, 2004) notion of 'respectability' is explored alongside 'izzat', or family honour, before moving on to consider the usefulness of Bourdieu's (1985, 1989, 1992) notions of habitus, field and capital for researching 'Asian' young adults.

The subsequent chapter, the second literature review, begins by investigating quantitative approaches to educational complementing research, including developmental and 'personality-matching' models, as well as more recent studies which have explored social class, ethnicity and gender. Following this, I examine some qualitative, social constructionist approaches which have been drawn upon in educational research, including discursive psychological approaches focusing on the impact of language, and Foucauldian notions of power, attempting to resolve some tensions between him and Bourdieu for this thesis. In the next section, I explore cultural approaches to the construction of identities, including the seminal theories of Brah (1996) and Hall (1990), and how their ideas complement Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

The third chapter of this thesis examines the methodology of this study in greater detail, including the assumptions I brought to the research, and how it was designed, from acquiring the sample, to conducting the research and subsequent analysis. Notions of reflexivity, significant in this study because of the assumptions I brought to the research, are examined, allowing me to investigate my own role within the research, including how I positioned

myself and how I was positioned by others, and the impact this had upon the study.

The fourth chapter, the first of the data analysis chapters, concerns the subject-positions that were constructed during the research process. Here, participants were constructing particular identities for themselves and for others, some of which were resisted, others embraced, for various purposes, and each inscribed with different levels of power. Forms of identity were important to study, having an impact upon which aspirations could be considered, and those that were prohibited, something that was lacking in educational policies on widening participation. The penultimate chapter of the thesis, the second of the data chapters, focuses on the young adults' constructions of aspirations and the roles that their parents and teachers had to play. There are two predominant concerns in this chapter – the first, focusing on the impact of educational policies on young adults, is related to the second concern, how social class, gender and caste had a bearing upon future aspirations and choices, particularly since they had a bearing upon the social and cultural resources young adults were able to draw upon. The final chapter is the conclusion. Here, I provide a brief summary of the chapters in this thesis before returning to the research question and research aims, exploring findings from the study.

CHAPTER 1:

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON SIKHS AND THEIR FUTURE EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES

INTRODUCTION

This first chapter is a review of the literature concerning young Sikh adults and their educational and occupational aspirations. Considerable research exists on the impact of various social categories, including social class, ethnicity and gender, upon the construction of future aspirations (e.g. Crozier, 2000; Shain, 2003, Bhatti, 1999; Archer, 2005), and these are a prime focus for this chapter, and this study as a whole. Such social categories are important, allowing access to different resources for young adults and their parents to draw upon when constructing aspirations, including forms of social, symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985, 1986, 1989). These also had an impact upon the construction of identities, which were important when constructing future decisions – certain forms of identity, particularly those based around gender, could constrain future options. Thus, these social categories can be seen as acting as a form of structure for young adults, limiting agency when constructing aspirations and identities.

The chapter begins by briefly exploring the Sikh community and their migration patterns to the UK in order to place this study within a social and historical context, and also to highlight how different Sikh communities have a range of issues which enable and constrain them when constructing future aspirations, including social class and the caste system. The impact of such

configurations of social divisions, and how they are practiced, vary between India, East Africa and the UK and there is a dearth of research on the connection (or lack of connection) between them which this study hopes to shed some light on.

Following this, I explore the New Labour government's AimHigher programme which was introduced during the period when this study was undertaken. This scheme focused on widening participation to Higher Education through increasing the aspirations of young adults from 'non-traditional' backgrounds. Such policies functioned as a form of structure for young adults who were in the process of making their future choices, limiting or permitting certain educational routes through how they were constructed in policy and by teachers responsible for selecting them for the programme.

Subsequently, I explore research concerning young Asian adults and their identities. Research on 'Asians' as a whole is drawn upon since Sikhs have mainly been subsumed under this category. Construction of gender identities is especially important for these young Asians, particularly if these were culturally constructed, as they could also function as a form of structure over their aspirations, allowing and constraining certain options. I link this in to Skeggs' (1997, 2004) notion of 'respectability' as a form of cultural capital for women which ties in to 'izzat' or family honour, a form of symbolic capital within the community, as well as constructions of 'hegemonic' masculinity (Connell, 1995), both of which are important when considering the symbolic and cultural capital that young adults possess. Next, I explore research on

the educational and occupational decision-making processes and how such research applies to Asians. Here, Pierre Bourdieu's (1985, 1989, 1992) notions of habitus, field and capital were important. Habitus and capitals functioned as a form of structure; it is through them that options could be considered and constrained. Such notions are explored with regard to 'Asian' parents, highlighting the various resources available to them when constructing their future aspirations and identities, and conveying how they had more resources to draw upon than had been traditionally considered.

1.1: SIKHISM, CASTE AND MIGRATION

1.11 THE SIKH RELIGION AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

Although this thesis is not Sikhism per se, it is useful to explore the origins of the religion and certain particularities, such as the caste system, before focusing on migration patterns of Sikhs to the UK to contextualise the study. Sikhism one of the youngest religions, was founded approximately 500 years ago in Punjab, North India (Nesbitt, 2005). The word 'Sikh' comes from Sanskrit meaning 'disciple' (Singh, 2006) and is based upon the teachings of ten teachers or Gurus, from the first, Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469-1539), to the last, Guru Gobind Singh Ji (1666-1708). Each Guru instilled a different set of teachings, including abolishing the caste system and greater equality between men and women, and contributed to the holy scriptures, the 'Guru Granth Sahib', which are seen as taking the place of the living Gurus (Singh, 2006). Furthermore, visible markers of Sikh identity were established, 'the five K's': *kes* (hair), *kara* (bangle), *kangha* (comb), *kirpan* (sword), *kachcha* (shorts). Thus, the body here becomes a symbol of Sikh identity (Axel, 2001).

However, despite the supposed abolition of the caste system by the Gurus, it continued to be practiced (Puri, 2003).

The caste system, as practiced in India, is a complex form of social stratification, with a number of subgroups, dividing people according into those castes in which they are born. Caste determines the social status, economic conditions and occupation of a person, as well as providing a direction for living and a code of behaviour (Kalra, 1980). The caste system is rigid, deterministic, with little social mobility and infuses everyday activities alongside religious and cultural practices (Morrish, 1971: 137).

Despite being seemingly abolished (Haviland, 2005), the caste system is still prevalent within Sikhism today, but the idiosyncrasies have altered (Ghuman, 2008). The hierarchy is based around land and therefore the highest caste is the *Jats* (farmers), followed by *Khatris/ Aroras* (craftspeople), *Ramgharias* (artisans), *Ahluwalias* (brewers) and finally *Dalits* (untouchables). Puri (2003) has argued that it was during the control of the Punjab during the British Empire when certain groups of Sikhs, in particular *Jats*, who were considered to be the bravest and thus useful for the British army, were rewarded through land by the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901. Consequently, certain castes were favoured and privileged.

Caste identities can still hold great weight for measuring social status, and these cultural structures were important for defining Sikhs as they established themselves in Britain (Brah, 1996). Importantly, “caste in Britain

is not an exact replica of caste in India; rather British-based configurations of caste have their own specific features [which is] highly differentiated, heterogeneous, variable and contested institution (Brah, 1996: 29)".

It is impossible to explore cultural and social forms of categorisation in isolation since social class, caste, gender and ethnicity intersect each other. Connections between these social divisions, and their salience in the construction of future aspirations, are lacking in research on Sikhs in the UK at present. Research does exist on gender, caste and social class within Indian society (e.g. Mohanty, 2004, Deshpande, 2001; Deshpande, 2002; Narasimhan, 2002), exploring how women from lower castes and social classes suffer increased forms of discrimination as a result of their disadvantaged positioning within these social categories. However, it is important to note that complexities of caste and social class combined in different ways for different groups in this study. The caste system, though more rigid in the subcontinent, having a greater bearing on status, has greater flexibility in Britain and had a minor role to play when constructing future aspirations, although it could be important for some parents when regarding endogamous marriage practices. Instead, for these young adults, social class and gender, tied in with the capitals they were able to draw upon, were of far greater importance. Consequently, as Ballard and Ballard (1977) suggest, a Sikh's caste does not indicate their status within British society. Intertwined with social class, the caste system produces a greater degree of complexity in Britain than in the subcontinent. There were differences in how

various Sikh migrants established themselves in Britain; their caste, combined with their social class, had an intricate impact (Bhachu, 1985b).

1.12 SIKH MIGRATION TO THE UK

South Asian migrants have been present in Britain for over 400 years, initially as seamen, but later as street traders (Visram, 2002). However, wide-scale mass migration occurred predominantly after the Second World War; the considerable number of migrants, from both the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent (mainly Punjab), satisfied huge demand for unskilled labour in British industry (Ballard and Ballard, 1977). Further years of South Asian migration occurred during the 1960s and 1970s with later migrants arriving from East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) and South East Asian (Malaysia, Singapore and Fiji) (Ballard and Ballard, 1977; Bhachu, 1990). In contemporary Britain, Sikhs, as a group, constitute 0.6% of the population, approximately 350,000 people[1].

Configurations of social class, caste and family structure were not homogeneous for Sikhs and two broader variations can be identified, impacting upon the construction of educational and occupational aspirations because of the resources they were able to bring (Bhachu, 1990). Research has indicated that wide-scale Punjabi Sikh migration began in Britain in the 1950s, during the post-war economic boom, and they occupied the lowest rungs in society (e.g. Miles and Cleary, 1993; Abbas, 2002;). Such migrants were primarily males from rural backgrounds and from the *Jat* caste; their

[1] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=954

initial intentions were to save as much money as possible to send back to families in the sub-continent (Brah, 1996).

The 1960s were a period of consolidation for Punjabi Sikhs as they set about recreating elements of Punjabi society, such as the *Gurdwara* (Sikh temple), and retaining more of their savings to send back in larger sums. However, as Ballard and Ballard (1977) suggest, initial reasons for migrating, for saving money then returning home, began to dissipate as Punjabi Sikh males began to bring their wives and children over from India.

East African Sikhs had very different routes to Britain. The early twentieth century saw *Ramgharia* or artisan Sikhs recruited by the British to expand and develop the infrastructure in East Africa (Mangat, 1969), many of whom stayed on to run these projects (Ballard and Ballard, 1977). However, post-independence Africanisation policies in the 1950s resulted in the position of East African Asians as a whole becoming increasingly precarious (Bhachu, 1990) and “there was no alternative but remigration” (Ballard and Ballard, 1977: 25). Many migrated in the 1960s and 1970s and hence are ‘twice migrated’ (Bhachu, 1990). Since they had already been through the process of migration, they were better resourced to cope with the demands of a second wave.

As Bhachu (1990) notes, East African Sikhs had many characteristics differentiating them from their Punjabi counterparts. They were more likely to be of the *Ramgharias* than *Jat,*; from an established community in East

Africa, possessed technical skills, and moved from urban regions in Africa to urban areas within Britain (Ghai, 1965), all of which facilitated their settlement processes (Brah, 1996). Compared with Punjabis, these Sikhs arrived with greater capital in terms of language, education, familiarity with urban institutions and bureaucratic processes (Bhachu, 1990). The majority of East African Asians, apart from those from Uganda[2], were able to transfer their financial capital over to Britain, thereby providing additional resources to draw. As such, they did not fit into several commonly held stereotypical assumptions about minority migrants (Bhachu, 1990) since they were predisposed to staying in the UK, and structured their lifestyle, future goals and mobilisation, as well as their construction of identity accordingly, rather than suffering from the 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979).

The parents of young people in this study were from both East Africa and India and, at times, both parents had not migrated from the same country; for example, one parent was from India, another from East Africa. Consequently, this had an impact on the habitus and capitals (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989, 1992) which families could draw upon when constructing aspirations for their children. Bourdieu's concepts are explored in greater depth later in this chapter.

Despite religion being a central point of identification for Sikhs (Guibernau and Rex, 1997), there is little homogeneity between them. Issues of caste, country of origin, social class, area of settlement, period and attitude to

[2] The expulsion of Asians from Uganda by Idi Amin meant that most of them, numbering approximately 30,000 to the UK, were unable to transfer economic capital. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/7/newsid_2492000/2492333.stm)

migration all combine in unique and intricate forms for different Sikhs in Britain today and have a bearing upon constructions of their educational and occupational aspirations. Such factors have not been explored previously, and there is a lack of research on different Sikh social-classes and how they interact with the education system; something which had to be greater acknowledged in educational policies.

1.2 NEW LABOUR AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION

This study was conducted during the early 2000s when widening participation to Higher Education (HE) formed a key aspect of the New Labour government's educational policies. In this section, I explore these policies to place this study within an educational and political context but, also, since they had a significant impact upon how students were implicitly constructed in policy.

Widening participation formed part of the educational agenda of Conservative governments of the 1990s, with the 'Access' scheme provided access courses and alternative routes to HE for those who had missed out. Despite this, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP, 1999) report found that by 1997, 47% of those entering HE were from the top three socio-economic groups in society. The New Labour government's election win in 1997 saw an increased focus on widening participation, bringing it into mainstream strategic plans, and targeting those groups, particularly from lower socio-economic and minority ethnic backgrounds, who were underrepresented within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) so that "all those who have the potential to benefit from higher education should have the opportunity to do so" (DfES, 2003a).

Two significant reports were produced in 1997 which sought to make widening participation a central concern of policy, increasing the range of vocational routes into HE. The Kennedy report, 'Learning Works', found those from lower socio-economic groups were more likely to be excluded

from entry into HE and called for widening, not just increasing, participation. The Dearing Report, 'Higher Education in a Learning Society", recommended allocating funding allocating funding to "give priority to those institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation" (NCIHE, 1997: 14). These two reports spawned a number of government research and policy papers, two of which were particularly important. The first government White Paper, 'The Future of Higher Education', was published in January 2003 and focused on widening participation to higher education. The 'Access Regulator' was introduced here, which sought to approve any changes in the fees that Higher Education Institutions could charge. The second paper, 'Widening Participation in Higher Education', published later in 2003 by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), included proposals for the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to widen participation to Higher Education.

Addressing this imbalance formed an integral part of the New Labour government's educational policies with a firm commitment to social justice to ensure that those from 'non-traditional' backgrounds were more likely to participate. As such, 'fair access' was introduced, increasing opportunities for under-represented and ethnic minority groups to enter Higher Education, and, in particular, the most prestigious universities, and study courses which offered greater financial returns. Alongside issues of social justice, central to widening participation were economic factors. Employment forecasts from the Institute for Employment Research in 2001 found that 50% of the 12 million jobs forecast to become available between 2004 and 2014 were most

likely to be filled by graduates. The report concluded that a lack of graduates could potentially stunt the growth of the UK as compared with other countries, and, consequently, universities had to reach out to groups from 'non-traditional' backgrounds to increase the participation in HE from the then 41% to 50% of those aged between 18 and 30 by the year 2010.

Four principal conditions were highlighted in the 2003 'Widening Participation in Higher Education' paper which had to be met if students were to enter HE: attainment, aspiration, application and admissions. Attainment was seen as important in order to widen participation to HE; just 18% of young adults from lower socio-economic backgrounds entered HE in 2000 (DfES, 2003b). Consequently, raising standards of education and attainment was considered to be an important route to widening participation in HE and a number of activities were introduced to address this, including mentoring schemes and study groups. Attainment levels were linked to aspirations; higher attainment had to be matched by higher aspirations in order for young adult's to enter HE. The 'AimHigher' campaign was introduced which, through various initiatives including summer schools, sought to encourage students to apply to university, showing them they could 'fit in'. The remaining two targets focused on HE applications and admissions and there was a greater focus on encouraging information to reach out to students and schools to ensure that admissions policies operated on merit.

In England, the scheme was introduced by David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, in September 2000 as a

special initiative. The document addressed implications of funds that would be allocated to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Initially, there were four central points of action which were important. The first sought to invest more funds into inner-city schools, encouraging greater links with HEIs and raising attainment levels within these schools. The second focused on those HEIs which had lower levels of recruitment from state schools, encouraging them to recruit more from those schools. The third point promoted HEIs to lower socio-economic groups and the final point, where opportunity bursaries were introduced, were to financially support working-class young adults from the inner city to enter full-time degrees.

The mantle of widening participation was taken up by the 'AimHigher' initiative, a significant education policy which focused on young adults from lower socio-economic backgrounds, targeting them to apply for, and enter, HE. The scheme was launched in schools and colleges, predominantly in deprived areas country-wide, by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2001 and increased partnerships were developed between schools, colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to achieve this. In 2004, the scheme was incorporated with a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Learning Skills Council (LSC) initiatives called 'Partnerships for Progression' to become the unified 'AimHigher' programme which ran across England through nine regional partnerships and 45 area partnerships across England. Apart from various activities, such as University residential visits and student talks, the programme provided better information, advice and guidance concerning specific issues related to both

FE and HE, including possible debt and vocational options. Teachers were encouraged to maintain and update their skills in order to be able to meet the demands of young adults in order to engage them and to provide them with advice and information on HE.

Two principal groups of young people were targeted through the programme. The first consisted of young adults aged between 13 and 19 who had the potential to enter, although no previous family history of, HE. The second group, those identified as ‘gifted and talented’, incorporated those achieving above the average for their age group, either academically, or in arts or sport. Some young adults could be in both groups. There was little consensus between different area partnerships as to what criteria should be employed when selecting young adults for the scheme, with responsibility varying from schools and teachers, to HEI’s (McCaig and Bowers-Brown, 2007).

Several incentives were offered by the government to ensure widening participation was achieved including paying the first £1,100 of tuition fees for pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the payment of tuition fees to be paid after students have graduated, and the income threshold at which students had to repay their university loans to increase from £10,000 to £15,000 from April 2005. In addition, the government setup a framework for those universities which wanted to increase their tuition fees to maintain widening access. This framework included drawing up an agreement which would last five years setting out the fees the institution wanted to charge up to a maximum of £3,000; the outreach work the university would conduct at

schools and colleges to increase levels of attainment, aspiration and applications; and the financial support and advice the university would offer to students. Such increases were justified by the potential earnings of graduates as "on average, graduates tend to earn substantially more than people with A levels who did not go to university. Projected over a working lifetime, the difference is something like £100,000 before tax at today's valuation[3]", significantly lower than the £400,000 a year figure in 2003 (DfES, 2003).

1.21 Evaluation of The AimHigher Programme

Figures from the five year period during and immediately after the young adults in this study had taken their GCSE exams, served to convey the impact of government initiatives. Government statistics on young adults who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and those who are not, a measure used to distinguish between those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, reveal how both boys and girls entitled to FSM have significantly achieved higher results. In addition, there have been increases in those from lower socio-economic backgrounds being accepted to HEIs, although the figures remain low, while those from the highest socio-economic backgrounds have decreased.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM : GCSE[4]							

[3] http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/WhyGoToUniversityOrCollege/DG_4016998

[4] http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/TIM/m002021/

Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A* to C GCSEs and equivalent[1] by eligibility for Free School Meals(FSM)							
		% achieving 5+ A* to C					
		2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
	FSM	20.4%	22.1%	25.5	28.7%	31.0%	35.4%
Boys	**Non-FSM**	49.9%	50.8%	53.8%	56.2%	58.3%	62.5%
	Unclassified	-	35.4%	39.0%	42.3%	43.6%	46.9%
	All pupils	45.5%	46.8%	49.9%	52.6%	54.8%	59.1%
	FSM	28.5%	30.2%	34.4%	37.4%	40.0%	44.7%
Girls	**Non-FSM**	60.8%	61.4%	64.2%	66.0%	67.5%	71.6%
	Unclassified	-	48.5%	45.8%	47.7%	51.3%	56.0%
	All pupils	56.1%	57.0%	60.0%	62.2%	63.9%	68.2%
	FSM	24.4%	26.1%	29.9%	33.0%	35.5%	40.0%
Total	**Non-FSM**	55.2%	56.1%	58.9%	61.0%	62.8%	67.0%
	Unclassified	-	41.1%	42.3%	44.8%	47.3%	51.2%
	All pupils	50.7%	51.9%	54.9%	57.3%	59.3%	63.5%

Accepted Applicants for HEI from 2003-2008							
Socio-Economic Status	**Social Class**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Higher managerial and professional occupations	M/C	17.8%	17.9%	16.6%	16.5%	16.6%	15.0%
Lower managerial and professional	M/C	24.9%	25.3%	24.2%	23.1%	23.1%	21.8%
Intermediate occupations	W/C	12.2%	12.2%	11.7%	10.8%	10.7%	10.9%
Small employers and own	W/C	6.0%	6.0%	5.7%	5.7%	5.7%	5.5%

account workers							
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	W/C	4.0%	3.9%	3.7%	3.5%	3.5%	3.3%
Semi-routine occupations	W/C	10.6%	10.6%	10.8%	10.1%	10.4%	12.7%
Routine occupations	W/C	4.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.4%	4.4%	4.8%
Not classified/ unknown	W/C	20.0%	19.6%	22.8%	25.9%	25.5%	26.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Despite these seeming signs of improvement, there are still stark differences between those from higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Vast differences have been found in HE participation depending upon region – those from the top 20% of advantaged areas have been found to be more likely to attend a HEI compared with those from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds (HEFCE, 2005), highlighting the significant impact of regional differences on whether young adults attend HEIs in the future.

Marginal increases in the lowest socio-economic backgrounds attending HE convey how the effects of the widening participation programs have not been as effective as hoped. Several explanations have been offered for these low rates and how HE is not a possible choice for all connected because of a complex combination of personal, social, economic and cultural issues. Thomas (2001) suggests one of the principal criticisms of the programme is that it is selective, designed to focus on increasing the participation of those working-class young adults who already have the potential to go to HE rather than all disadvantaged young adults, something that was apparent in this study as certain forms of identity were not considered as compatible with HE, including forms of hegemonic masculinity. Such identities were constructed

as against academic success by teachers and young men who 'performed' such identities were excluded from these programs, limiting their future options, and were usually left in a state of uncertainty as to what they would be able to do after their GCSEs.

Rather than these education reforms focusing on promoting choice and diversity, existing hierarchical inequalities of class, 'race' and gender were found to be simply reproduced, and it is here where "uncritical use of the language of 'opportunity' in a deeply inegalitarian society can actually serve to legitimate rather than challenge existing relations of domination" (Whitty, 2001: 289).

In this way, young adults were constructed differently through policy, where 'right' and 'wrong' forms of identity, based around social class and 'race', were apparent and important and, indeed, it has been argued that New Labour's rhetoric has failed to fully acknowledge the various barriers that exist for those from non-traditional backgrounds (Archer and Hutchings, 2000), thus oversimplifying them. Studies have found that the habitus[5] of such working-class young adults does not allow them to conceive of HE as an 'expected' route, as it does for those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (e.g. Reay et al, 2005), leading them to believe that education is 'not for us' (e.g. Archer et al, 2003). Such findings have been linked to educational institutions - research has drawn attention to how schools are considered as middle-class institutions by those from the working-class which "valorizes middle-class rather than working-class cultural capital" (Reay,

[5] A Bourdieuian (1977, 1992) concept which refers to individual's socially learnt dispositions. I explore this concept in greater depth later in this chapter.

2001: 334) and, as a result, “New Labour policies appear to be based on a ‘deficit’ model where initiatives are designed to address the perceived inadequacies of excluded groups” (Hayton and Paczuska, 2002: 259), where the middle-class are constructed as the ideal (Gewirtz, 2001), rather than acknowledging and seeking to understand established cultural issues which are an intricate part of individuals’ habitus. Consequently, there is a foregrounding of individual agency and a downplaying of structural inequalities which limit the effectiveness of widening participation. As Gewirtz (2001) stresses:

> “So long as hierarchies of schools and jobs – exist, the middle classes will always find ways of getting the best out of the system, of ensuring that their cultural capital is more valuable than that of any working class competitors. So without dismantling the hierarchies that structure schooling and employment provision, it is difficult to see how a genuine widening of opportunities can occur” (Gewirtz, 2001: 373)

Thus, existing inequalities are maintained and reproduced, with middle-class capital is constructed as most valuable, and other forms of identity positioned against this. Similar findings have also been found with different gender (Skeggs, 1997) and ethnic groups (Archer and Yamashita, 2003; Archer et al, 2001) and were important for this study. Such criticisms of AimHigher were especially significant for this study; some working-class young adults and their parents were positioned against this middle-class ideal by one of the heads of year, lacking the requisite adeptness in order to successfully help

their children, and thereby constructed as being over-reliant on him for advice. Furthermore, despite the tendency to homogenise young adults in policy, there was a blurring of boundaries in this study and Amarpreet, one of the middle-class young men, did demonstrate characteristics associated with the working-class because of his relatively recent migration to the UK from India. The failure to account for these subtle variations was another problem of these policies.

Research (e.g. Archer and Hutchings, 2000, Archer 2007) has indicated that defining widening participation practices in this way has an impact upon students' future decision-making processes, placing universities within hierarchies for 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students, where the working-class realise that through such a system, "only 'crap' universities are open to them" (Archer, 2007: 644). In this way, as Reay et al (2005) argue, future choice can be considered as "structured and structuring…rooted in fine discriminations and classificatory judgements of places for us and places for others" (Reay et al, 2005: 160) in which ethnicity, gender and social class combine, but not in any deterministic fashion. As I demonstrate later in this chapter, other research has discussed the importance of ethnicity and gender and how these are tied in with social class when constructing future aspirations and participating in higher education. These social categories have a significant impact upon the resources that parents and young adults are able to draw upon when constructing their future choices, which were oversimplified and not fully accounted for in policy.

Although the AimHigher programme created a form of structure over the future decision-making aspirations and choices of young adults, it failed to acknowledge other issues which could also have an impact on options. This was particularly important for the young adults in this study and, as I discuss later in the data chapters, their habitus and the capitals were directed by both their social and cultural background, which had a direct impact on the construction of their aspirations and their identities. The AimHigher programme was lacking here, placing greater focus on social class and neglecting other factors such as ethnicity and gender which can have a bearing upon educational and occupational aspirations and choices, allowing certain options and prohibiting others. In this regard, the model was simplistic and not appropriate for these students failing to acknowledge the complexity inherent within any understanding of students' aspirations. Such an argument is supported by research exploring how social class, gender, 'race' and ethnicity intersect and interweave to create a myriad of complex identities, and vary according to context. For example, intersections of various categories of identity have been explored in educational research on working-class young adults (e.g. Reay, 2001; Archer and Hutchings, 2000; 2003), on working-class men (e.g. Archer et al, 2001), and with working-class women (e.g. Reay, 2003) as well as gender (Asian girls) and ethnicity (e.g. Siann and Khalid, 1990; Dale et al, 2000; Ahmad et al, 2003; Shain, 2003) and ethnicity and class (e.g. Bhatti, 1999; Vincent, 1996; Crozier, 2000; Francis and Archer, 2005, Strand, 2010), highlighting how different aspects of identity interweave and interrelate with each other, producing complex, multi-layered explanations for exploring how identities, and future decisions,

are constructed. Indeed, cultural nuances could be very important on constructions of identity, particularly when concerning young women; ‘izzat’, or family honour, (which I explore later in the chapter) could also act as a form of structure over women’s choices and such forms of identity can allow certain options to be considered, whilst constraining others, and, therefore, are important when focusing on aspirations. The intersections of forms of identity are explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

When considering policy, greater input could have been obtained from other organisations such as local community groups involved in providing information and guidance to young adults. Such organisations could have had greater knowledge of the various issues which are important to those from various cultural groups, including those concerning the various cultural resources that young adults and parents are able to draw upon. In this way, the ‘hot’ knowledge that many of these young adults drew and relied upon when constructing their aspirations could have been developed further and used to target ‘Asian’ groups more effectively.

The role of teachers has also come under scrutiny. Teachers were expected to plan the progress of young adults for the entire 14-19 phase, which was impossible for form tutors at the school in this study to do because of the high staff turnover and low retention rates. Many teachers had only been in charge of their tutor groups for a matter of months and a consequence of this was a lack of knowledge and information about their students. Future planning was also hindered by a lack of training offered to teachers to

develop their skills and knowledge further, particularly those that concerned HE (e.g. Morris et al, 2004), as well considering offering information to students low on a list of priorities (Judkins et al, 2004: 32); all of which was evident for teachers in this study.

The AimHigher programme increasing aspirations and widening participation to HE can be seen as having a profound impact on the aspirations of some young adults in this study. Despite policy seemingly increasing the chances for participation for those from the working-class, constructing some as not possessing the 'correct' skills and failing to acknowledge crucial cultural nuances meant that further barriers could established, reinforcing existing inequalities. Other issues also acted as a form of structure over aspirations, including those associated with 'Asian' groups and I explore these in the proceeding sections.

1.3 RESEARCH ON YOUNG ASIAN ADULTS

1.31 The Importance of Gender and 'Izzat' for future choices

Although the AimHigher programme focused predominantly on social class for determining which students were eligible to participate, other research has highlighted how social class is intersected by gender and ethnicity, each of which is important to explore as they allow different resources, both social and cultural, to be drawn upon when constructing future aspirations and identities, highlighting how such categories function as a form of structure and limit the agency open to individuals.

However, the issue of gender has gained greater importance, particularly in relatively recent debates concerning the 'underachievement' of boys. The inception of school league tables helped to bring increased attention to the breakdown of results according to gender, highlighting how girls consistently outperform boys (Francis, 2006). Recent statistics have served to support this, showing 54.4% of girls achieved five or more A*-C grade GCSEs compared with 47.1% of boys (DCSF, 2009). Such discrepancies have been linked to a 'crisis in masculinity, with boys struggling due to changing social and economic relations and, consequently, the "surrounding images of masculinity are complex and confused" (Frosh et al, 2002: 1). These arguments have been criticised for their simplicity, reducing both 'masculinity' and 'femininity' to essentialist categories, ignoring the numerous differences existing between boys and girls, including those based upon social class and ethnicity, and the importance of cultural constructions of gender which could form a barrier to aspirations and future choices. Consequently, despite some

research indicating that many young Asian adults would prefer to continue studying after post-16 compulsory education (e.g. Tanna, 1990; Thornley and Siann, 1991; Modood, 1993; Basit, 1996; Bhopal, 1997; Singh-Raud, 1998), other research has indicated that there are considerable differences between the options open to boys and girls (e.g. Bhatti, 1999; Basit, 1996), which can constrain future options, allowing certain things to be considered, and prohibiting others.

Research on young Asians and their relationships with their parents is conflicting. From those young adults that found parents were a richer source of careers information than teachers (e.g. Kalra et al, 1999), to others who considered their parents lack of knowledge a drawback (e.g. Crozier et al, 2003). Indeed, research has found this to impact upon parent-child relationships. Bhatti (1999) found generational differences between some young adults and parents as to the value of education; Dale et al (2002) discovered that some young Asians felt coerced into post-compulsory education by parents when they wanted to enter employment; and Brah (1993) found that there was pressure on some Asian females to prioritise family over their careers.

Indeed, the young adult/parent relationship is inextricably tied in with gender (Eccles, 1994; Powney et al, 2003; Weiner, 1985) and similar findings have been found with Sikhs and other Asian groups (e.g. Tanna, 1990; Abbas, 2000; Basit, 1997; Ghuman, 2001). Young Asian men have been constructed as effeminate and quiet (Connolly, 1998) and ‘believers and achievers’ (Mac

an Ghaill, 1988) and more likely to be studious and hardworking (Ghuman, 1999). However, it has been argued that since the 'Rushdie Affair' of 1988 (Archer, 2003) and 'disturbances' in northern cities, such as the 'Manningham riots' of 1985 in Bradford (Salgado-Pottier, 2008), that they are now more likely to be associated with violence (Alexander, 2000).

Alternatively, research on Asian women has placed emphasis on the role of the Asian woman in her family, and how certain avenues and opportunities are considered taboo (Thornley and Siann, 1991; Wade and Souter, 1992; Basit, 1997; Ghuman, 2001; Haw, 1994). The notion of 'izzat' here is important. Loosely defined as 'family honour', it is a code of living that has different levels of prominence in various social and cultural contexts. 'Izzat' conveys that young adults should behave with modesty thereby avoiding shame on their families whilst simultaneously showing respect for their elders (Sekhon and Szmigin, 2005), thereby functioning as a form of structure over cultural forms of behaviour. Interestingly, social networks, including the extended family, have also been found as useful for maintaining 'izzat'; rather than the network being a positive source for information and support, Crozier (2004) and Crozier and Davies (2006) discovered that some Asian parents could use other parents in their social network as a source of 'surveillance' on their own children, partially to ensure they were safe, but also to ensure their 'izzat' was not compromised.

Applications of 'izzat' are not applied equally to their children by parents - whereas the 'izzat' of a girl has to be enhanced by her choice of career, boys

are allowed greater autonomy over their future decisions (Jeffrey, 1979; Mandelbaum 1990). Other research has stressed greater complexity with parents only supporting daughters for occupations that did not compromise 'izzat', prohibiting options which did (Thornley and Siann, 1991). Consequently, girls were not encouraged to apply for particular jobs such as nursing because of the uniform (i.e. a skirt) (Ghuman, 2002). This is further supported by Basit's work (1996) on the aspirations of Muslim girls. Muslim parents in her study prevented their daughters from accepting work placements that they considered improper. As a result, careers teachers were more likely to give Muslim girls placements in predominantly Asian environments that were less likely to be objected to by parents although:

> "This stance effectively limited the girls' experience of the world of work, as they were unable to attain first-hand information about occupations they aspired to go into. Consequently, very few chose to go into careers pertaining to their work experience." (Basit 1996: 236)

Indeed, this had implications for the continuation of post-16 education for girls, though no similar restrictions were placed on boys. However, Dale et al (2002) found that there were considerable differences in the way the notion of 'izzat' was applied to Asian girls and little congruence with how they were expected to behave by families. Some families prevented girls from going outside on their own, with college and university forbidden whereas in other families, girls were encouraged to go to university, even if it meant living

away from home; parents' trusted their daughters to behave in an appropriate way.

Although research on 'izzat' specific to British-Sikh women is lacking and predominantly transgresses boundaries between 'Sikh' and 'South Asian', there are many shared similarities in their experiences. One such study by Sekhon and Szmigin (2005) found that 'izzat' is context specific – it does not always have to be upheld in every situation. Their research on the ethnicity and acculturation process of young Sikhs in Britain discovered that participants were content to adopt 'western' practices, but, dependent on the situation, they also felt the need to fulfil parental expectations in order to maintain the family's 'izzat'. This included attending events, such as festivals, and visiting the g*urdwara* (Sikh temple), where being 'Sikh' could be constructed in formal 'Sikh' settings, thereby giving them greater authenticity.

Identities were then fluid and dynamic, changing accordingly with context and this contrasts with Bourdieu's notion of habitus, a more structured theorisation of identity, explored later in this chapter. Instead, seeing the young adults' identities in this way links in far more with Stuart Hall's (1990) notion of 'being' and 'becoming', which I also explore in depth in the following chapter. Identity from his perspective has a fixed element, the 'being', where members of the same group have shared histories and cultures which construct a shared identity. However, identities are also in a state of flux and, therefore, they are in a process of 'becoming', combining newer experiences with shared histories to construct new and unique forms of identity. In this

way, the young adults' identities could be seen as 'being', having a shared set of histories located, in part, in cultural artefacts such as the *gurdwara*. Since these identities were located in a 'new' location, Britain, they were also in a process of 'becoming', defined alongside social class, gender and caste to create new and original configurations of identity.

I consider 'izzat' a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989, 1992), having a bearing on the social networks of families, structuring behaviour of young adults and their parents. Families, in their wider communities, are often judged by 'izzat'; a girl behaving 'inappropriately', such as dressing immodestly, can have implications for their family, reducing her suitability as a marriage partner (Afshar, 1994). Furthermore, when considering the impact of 'izzat' on South Asian women's future aspirations, Beverley Skeggs' study on working-class women's search for respectability in Britain is useful. In her seminal book, 'Formations of Class and Gender' (1997), Skeggs shows the complexity in women's negotiations and constructions of their identities, which were both gendered and classed. As part of her ethnographic longitudinal study, 83 young white women were studied from the beginning of their caring courses at a further education college, to their eventual careers and family lives to explore how they "take up, try on, and discard positions of femininity" (Skeggs, 1997: 98). Indeed, femininity, and its various constructions, is important for Skeggs, highlighting the different social, economic and cultural positions of women. For her, femininity can be seen as a "the process through which women are gendered and become specific sorts of women" (Skeggs, 1997: 98) and this is distinguishable by social

class. As Skeggs later argues, both black and white working-class women have historically been constructed “as the sexual deviant against which femininity [is] defined” (Skeggs, 2001: 297) and constructions of such women as ‘slutty’ and immoral dominate. Instead, it is the middle and upper class females who embody the correct form of femininity, associated with being caring. Consequently, ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ forms of women’s behaviour are structured alongside and against this form of femininity.

The college courses that the working-class women in Skeggs’ sample studied allowed them to seek a ‘respectability’ which they hoped would distinguish them from their working-class origins. As such, these women “have to continually prove themselves as respectable through their caring performances” (Skeggs, 1997: 64). Here, the social class of the women was important:

> “It was not spoken of in the traditional sense of recognition – I am working class – but rather, was displayed in their multitudinous efforts *not to be* recognized as working-class...[and] made enormous efforts to distance themselves from the working class.” (Skeggs, 1997: 74)

It was through this process of class ‘dis-identification’ that these working-class women sought the ‘correct’ form of femininity allowing them to obtain social, cultural and symbolic capital. By comparing themselves with middle-class women, and distancing themselves from the working-class, these working-class women could construct versions of themselves which were

against the “dirt and waste, sexuality and contagion, danger and disorder, degeneracy and pathology...the moral evaluations by which the working class were coded and became known and are still reproduced today” (Skeggs, 2004: 4). However, just as with Foucault (whose notions of power I explore in the following chapter), there was resistance to the working-class women’s constructions of femininity and their exclusion; middle-class women had more social, cultural and economic resources available and “exclusions occur because the women do not have access to economic resources and cultural ways to be anything other than working class. Their structural positioning does not enable access to productive resources” (Skeggs, 1997: 74-75).

The search for respectability can be linked to the notion of ‘izzat’ or respectability for South Asians. ‘Izzat’, particularly for women, is an important source of cultural respectability especially in the immediate local community regardless of social class or caste; behaving in a way that does not bring ‘shame’ upon the family was important for young girls and had an impact upon their future decisions as well as their social and leisure activities. However, rather than acting a source of class *dis-identification* as the search for respectability did for the women in Skeggs’ study, ‘izzat’ is instead a tool for cultural *identification*, a way for young adults to ‘fit in’ with accepted cultural norms and expectations thereby structuring their behaviour. Consequently, just as with the search for ‘respectability’ in Skeggs’ research, ‘izzat’ can be also considered as a form of cultural capital, stressing ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ forms of behaviour. This was certainly pertinent for the young adults in this study and has been found elsewhere (e.g. Dwyer, 2000).

Possessing and demonstrating the correct form of 'izzat' allowed them a form of cultural currency which, rather than limited to the individual, could be drawn upon by parents and families who could combine this with social capital. Similar to Skeggs, comparisons were made with the 'other' in the local community – with those parents who had 'lost' 'izzat', through their children's behaviour – and cultural capitals here could be transferred into symbolic capital, giving parents who possessed 'izzat' a certain elevated status.

Ensuring that the 'izzat' is upheld helps to maintain the family and is essential to the stability of the community (Basit, 1997; Ansari, 2004), something that was not recognised or understood by the school but instead perceived as a lack of parental concern for their children, or blamed on the notion of a 'cultural clash' (Singh-Raud, 1997). This model, based on the assumption that the South Asian girl has to negotiate two cultures, that of home and school, places the focus of the 'clash' on the arranged marriage (Tanna, 1990). A similar claim has also been made for British Sikhs, in particular women, who have been perceived as living "between two cultures" where there are "manifold contradictions between the expectations of the minority community and the demands of wider, western society" (Anwar, 1998:172). However, there are problems with such a deterministic, inflexible explanation. Such an approach "implies that young people are simply caught up in a vacuum, in some sort of no-man's cultural desert" (Anwar, 1998 :175); young Asian girls, who are "between and betwixt lifestyles", are presented as those "who can do little but suffer their parents imposition upon them of alien

cultural values" (Bhachu, 1985:172) and therefore, "South Asian girls who aspire to careers are prevented from achieving their goal by cultural and family pressures" (Thornley and Siann, 1991: 237).

Importantly, the use of the cultural clash model of analysis means that any discussion of institutionalized racism within the school, as constraining the educational and career opportunities of South Asian girls, was avoided (Ahmed & Wilson, 1978; Amos & Parmer, 1984; Iquabal, 1980). Consequently, stereotyping of Asian girls has resulted in a lack of interest from both teachers and careers advisers (Thornley and Siann, 1991); Muslim girls constructed as 'problem students' (Basit, 1997), oppressed and subordinated within their family (Gipps and Gilborn, 1998), resulting in Asian girls constructing lower expectations for themselves (Gillborn, 1990; Gillborn, 1995; Basit, 1996; Basit, 1997). Rather than a focus on a cultural clash, these cultural nuances had to be acknowledged in the AimHigher programme and could be crucial for understanding how aspirations were constructed by Asian groups, particularly for young women.

1.32 Notions of Masculinity and what it means to be a 'man'

The young men in this study all demonstrated various forms of masculinity during this research, both while I was trying to acquire a sample, and during interviews. Just as with 'izzat', which largely concerned young women, different forms of masculinity could function as a form of structure, some of which were constructed as 'incompatible' with academic work by teachers who were responsible for selecting students for AimHigher initiatives,

resulting in their future options being constrained. Thus, how masculine identities are constructed are important to explore.

Masculinity, from a broad social constructionist approach, concerns how and why particular social contexts allow different forms of masculine identity to be expressed and performed, stressing its fluidity and dynamism. It is considered as something that is performed rather than ascribed (Connell, 1995), is "situated doing" (West and Zimmerman, 1991: 15) which varies according to context, and is acquired and produced through constant performance rather than a 'situated essence' within the body (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Butler, 1990). Thus, rather than being 'fixed', masculinities are social constructs based around "configurations of practice structured around gender relations" (Connell, 1995: 44) and contain a plurality of forms which are "unstable and multiple, as decentred and subject to changing contexts, in a constant play of reproduction and innovation" (Westwood, 1996: 24).

Judith Butler's (1990, 1993, 1997, 2004) notion of the 'performativity' of gender identities are important here. For Butler, "Gender is not exactly what one 'is' nor is it precisely what one 'has'" (Butler, 2004: 42) but is instead formed in performances where "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990: 25). Gender, for her, is socially and culturally produced, defining gendered forms of behaviour, which individuals internalise through repetition, allowing them to 'act' appropriately within society. Furthermore, there is a focus here on *what* form the performance takes, rather than on *whether* to perform, and

consequently, through exploring ‘performativity’, it is possible to move beyond seeing gender in simple dichotomous categories.

Drawing on Foucault, Butler posits that embedded within each performance of gender will be a negotiation of power, a “reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (Butler, 1993: 2). No performance of gender can be neutral and expected ways of behaving can compound and reinforce existing hegemonic conventions of gender through linguistic practices, i.e. being defined as ‘he’ or ‘she’ and the appropriate way to ‘act’ within such categories, or subvert them. Such notions of the ‘performativity’ of gender were important in this study; during their accounts, young men often ‘performed’ masculinity in particular ways, which was positioned socially and culturally. When trying to acquire a sample during Parents’ Evening, young men would exhibit forms of behaviour located within ‘acceptable’ social and cultural boundaries, because their parents were with them. However, when with their peers, they were more likely to demonstrate ‘hegemonic’ or dominant forms of masculinity within their peer group (Connell, 1995), a form of cultural capital which gave them symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989, 1992).

Forms of masculinity were constructed in opposition to other young males as well as women in this study, and Connell’s (1995) conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity concedes that there are different and competing ways to be a man. Forms of masculinity are hierarchically arranged; some of them being privileged over others (for example ‘sporty’ masculinities over

‘homosexual’ ones). According to Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity is the “form[s] of masculinity that [are] culturally dominant in a given setting ... [they are] a position of cultural authority and leadership, not total dominance; [because] other forms of masculinity persist alongside” (Connell 1995: 209). Thus, hegemonic masculinity is seen as dialectical; it is not just a process of one-way socialisation accounting for “the dominant position of men and the subordinate position of women” (Connell, 1995: 77).

Similar to the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is the notion of ‘laddishness’, an explanation for the ‘failure’ of boys in education. Here, boys have been found to have apathy for authority, academic work and formal qualifications (Ruddock et al, 1996); they have formed masculine subgroups at school which are in conflict with the values of the institution (Mac and Ghaill, 1994). This usually concerns “hedonistic practices” associated with men, including “‘having a laugh’, alcohol consumption, disruptive behaviour, objectifying women, and an interest in pastimes and subjects constructed as masculine” (Francis, 1999: 357). Such ‘laddish’ behaviour has been found to impede boys’ academic achievement and, subsequently, as seen with the young men in this study, can impact upon their aspirations through limiting the options which are available to them and how they are constructed in educational policy.

Jackson (2002, 2003) highlights ‘laddishness’ as a tool that boys use to defend themselves from negative judgement by peers if they are perceived as being ‘academic’ or at the same time ‘feminine’. For Jackson (2002), there

are four primary forms of ‘laddishness’ that boys can use to preserve their sense of self-worth. The first form, procrastination, involves completing school work at the last minute, providing boys with an excuse as well as masking over any lack of ability that they may have. Secondly, boys could intentionally withdraw effort and reject academic work; by doing this, they encourage the idea that they are capable of success but simply chose not to participate. Furthermore, boys could avoid the appearance of studying whilst at the same time promoting the idea that they were ‘achieving’. This ‘effortless achievement’ for Jackson is the ideal that boys try to aim for. Finally, boys can cause disruptive behaviour within the classroom which has a range of benefits for them, including enhanced status within their peer group and shifting attention away from their poor academic performance.

According to Jackson (2002), acceptance by peers is usually dependent upon boys negotiating an identity that is acceptable and this is achieved through displaying ‘laddish’ elements of behaviour. But this can also be expressed in forms of ‘talk’, dress code and body language. Consequently, through adopting these self-worth protection strategies, a subculture is created within the school in which boys do not want to appear as ‘academic’ or ‘nerds’, characteristics which are identified with females and with less ‘masculine’ boys (Martino, 1999). Such behaviour runs against the school ethos but is perceived by boys to be at an acceptable cost if their ‘macho’ image and subgroup membership is preserved (Francis, 2000), providing them with a form of cultural and symbolic capital amongst their peers. Notions of ‘laddishness’ and ‘hegemonic masculinity’ were prevalent during

the Sixth Form Open Evening I attended, but also common in the narratives of young men in both data chapters; the forms of identity they constructed having a significant impact upon their future aspirations since some were constructed as incompatible with academic success by teachers who were responsible for selecting students for AimHigher activities.

1.4 The Role of Parents, and Asian Parents, on Future Choices, and the Impact of Pierre Bourdieu

In this section of the chapter, I review literature concerning the impact that social class, caste and gender can have in the construction of aspirations, the configuration of which can be multifarious, combining in different ways for different pupils. Literature here is conflicting. Although the role of parents has been found to be significant, this can vary according to their social class, the gender of the child, and the habitus and capitals they possess (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989, 1992).

I continue this section by turning to research on Asian parents. A dearth of research on the education of Sikhs means that I draw upon research concerning Asians as a whole as well as on Sikhs (e.g. Bhachu, 1990; Brah, 1996; Brooks, 2002; Bhatti, 1999; Haw, 1998; Basit, 1997; Crozier et al, 2003; Thornley and Siann, 1991; Dale et al, 2002). I realise that this is contradictory considering that I claim distinctions between Sikhs and other South Asian groups can be significant. However, although this may be the case, it is also important to realise that there are shared commonalities between these groups:

> "Culturally, a Madrasi Indian girl will be considerably different from a Bengali Indian girl. However, a Punjabi Muslim girl from Pakistan would have a greater deal in common culturally with a Punjabi Sikh girl from India, for example in the language spoken,

> style of cooking, musical tastes, style of dress, etc."
>
> (Singh-Raud, 1999: 10)

In this way, I suggest that East African Sikhs will have commonalities with other Asian groups from East Africa; regional and cultural variations can be just as important as religious. Furthermore, although all the research on the various South Asian groups I draw upon does not concern Asians from the same region, there will be certain similarities in their experiences, since "The educational achievements of South Asians have been shaped by economic, social and political developments in the post war history of British race relations" (Abbas, 2000: v). There is a lack of research on the connection between caste, social class and ethnicity and the impact they have on aspirations, which this study seeks to shed some light.

1.4.1 Role of Parents in Constructing Aspirations

The role that parents play in the decision-making process of young adults is by no means as simple and straightforward as previous model-based theories, which I explore in the following chapter, claim (Super, 1957; Ginzberg et al, 1951; Gottfredson, 1981). Their involvement is instead "complex and interactive" (Hemsley-Brown, 1999: 88), "multi-faceted" (Hanafin and Lynch, 2002: 36), and occurring in a range of "work-related and domestic contexts" (Vincent, 2001: 349). Thus, as Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) argue:

> "The family context of attitudes and values, though, has huge unconscious persistence in the decision-making of 14-18 year olds, and we must regard the

> choices that are made during this time as being…a synthesis of inherited values and emerging individual values. The choices of young people are never free of the influence of their family…" (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001: 204)

Along with providing this 'synthesis of values', parents have been found to be an effective source for finding work experience placements for their children (Hodkinson, 1995; Lynn et al, 2000); expressing the value and benefits of training to their children (Semple, 1994); informing them about fair treatment by employers and trainers (Hodkinson et al, 1996; Semple et al, 1998); and using their social networks to play a critical role in aiding young men find employment (Meadows, 2001).

Through this they "provide a general framework of aspirations and hopes for their children" (Ball et al, 1998: 23) and "a space within which choices are made and validated" (Macrae, 1997: 101); a "framed field of reference" (Foskett and Hesketh, 1996: 36). Consequently, it has been argued that parental roles are intrinsic to all forms of post-16 choices, including entry to further and higher education (Howieson et al., 1993; Middleton & Loughead, 1993; Penick & Jepsen, 1992), and the role parents play will vary according to social class (Hanafin and Lynch, 2002; Crozier, 2000), ethnicity (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1999), the extended family (Kidd, 1984; Hodkinson, 1995) and the gender of the child (Lareau, 1989), all of which will shape how parents construct aspirations for their child, which aspirations are

constructed, and the social and cultural resources they are able to draw upon when doing so.

Earlier research on parents and social class relied upon highly ethnocentric cultural deficit models which claimed that working class parents are limited both with their intelligence (e.g. Hess and Shipman, 1965) and their use of language (e.g. Bernstein, 1971), whilst middle-class parents retained expectations and values which were to be found within the educational system (Deutsch, 1961). Thus, a portion of blame was unfairly assigned to working-class parents rather than an exploration of the failings and inequalities of the educational system, which New Labour policies on aspirations and widening participation have not entirely broken away from, but reinforced to an extent (Archer, 2003). Such views are considered antiquated in academia and recent years have seen research place greater emphasis upon parental social class and how it has an impact upon the construction of aspirations (e.g. Ball et al, 2000; Reay, 1998; Hodkinson et al, 2007; Hodkinson et al, 1996; Reay et al, 2005). Such explanations and findings have relied heavily on Bourdieu's (1985) notions of 'habitus' and 'capital' to explore the different ways in which middle class and working class parents construct aspirations for their children and, hence, are important to explore since they underpin much sociological thought in recent educational research and have a significant impact upon this study.

1.4.2 BOURDIEU, HABITUS AND CAPITAL

Bourdieu's (1985, 1986, 1989) contribution to educational research and cultural theory has been immensely important within the broader Social Sciences and, in particular, his concepts of 'habitus' and 'capital' have attracted much attention from literary critics and theorists within educational research (e.g. Reay, 1998; Hodkinson, 1995; Crozier, 2000; Sullivan, 2001; Ball et al, 2000, Hodkinson et al, 2007; Reay, 1998; Reay et al, 2005; Reay, 2000). His ideas allow a different understanding when exploring culture and social class, without prioritising either, thereby avoiding mistakes made by cultural deprivation explanations in implying that higher-class cultures are superior to their working-class equivalents. Bourdieu's standpoint attempts to bridge structural and constructionist approaches, which I also find useful and explore in the proceeding chapter. Therefore, rather than seen as a theorist who is distinct from other social constructionist perspectives I draw upon, I will argue Bourdieu is someone who complements social constructionist ideas. He explores the construction of people's social worlds but stresses that they do not have complete agency over such constructions, instead, these are determined by objective structures, such as language and culture, which impact upon human action, and thus, his position can be seen as a form of structural constructionism.

For Bourdieu (1989), the concept of habitus refers to how all people have a series of socially acquired internalised schemes through which they perceive, understand and appreciate the social world; it is through these structures, or habitus, that people produce their practices and behaviours. As Bourdieu

states, habitus is the “product of the internalisation of the structures” of the social world (Bourdieu, 1989: 18) and refers not only to character, morality, or socialization per se, but to “deep structural” classificatory and assessment propensities, socially acquired, and manifested in outlooks and opinions. Such constructions of habitus are important in widening participation policies, considering working-class habitus against the middle-class ideal.

According to Bourdieu, habitus is acquired, and developed, through long-term occupation of a social position within the social world. Therefore, the nature of one’s habitus will vary according to variations in historical and cultural settings. As such, habitus cannot be theorised as a fixed essence, operating like a computer program, constraining and determining thoughts and choice of action, but those from similar social and cultural positions are likely to share a similar habitus and, indeed, inhabit the same social space or ‘field’ which can change:

> “I am talking about dispositions *acquired through experience,* thus variable from place to place and time to time. This ‘feel for the game’, as we call it, is what enables an infinite number of ‘moves’ to be made, adapted to the infinite number of possible situations which no rule, however complex, can foresee.” (Bourdieu, 1990: 9)

Consequently, Bourdieu’s form of ‘structural constructionism’ although exploring how individuals are situated through their habitus and field, is different from other social constructionist positions I partly draw upon and

explore in the proceeding chapter, which explore the dynamics of power and language in any interaction. Compared with discursive psychologists, Bourdieu's habitus places emphasis on structured 'lived' experiences rather than solely focusing on the impact of language or individuals being subject to discourse. As such, social class can be seen as heterogeneous, rather than homogeneous, and individuals from the same social class will not all have the same habitus; personal characteristics, including gender and cultural background, all help to shape and define habitus in different ways.

All forms of action occur within fields – social arenas (such as within science, law and education) where the struggle for resources occurs. The connection between habitus and field is described as 'an obscure and double relation' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 126) since there is no fixity in how they impact upon each other and, instead, the relationship is fluid and dynamic:

> "On one side it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus ... On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or *cognitive construction*. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world." (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 127)

'Capital' (a term Bourdieu borrows from economics) is acquired, and used, as a form of currency in various fields and he explores them in terms of three principal areas. The first, 'economic capital', concerns material and financial resources and how they can be employed for practical use. For example, in education, this form of capital can be used by parents to buy material goods, such as computers, to aid their children's education or hire tutors.

The second, relating to ‘cultural capital’, is of most concern to educational researchers. The concept represents the collection of non-economic forces, including family background, social class and varying investments in, and commitments to, education, which influence academic success. Bourdieu (1985) distinguishes three forms of cultural capital - the *embodied state* is directly related to, and incorporated within, the individual, representing what they know and are able do. Since the embodied state cannot be separated from the individual, and occurs over a period of time, it is acquired and can take the form of learning or training. As such, a student who has completed an Economics degree, which is valued in certain institutional settings, has now embodied that form of knowledge. Consequently, as embodied capital becomes integrated into the individual, it becomes a type of habitus and therefore cannot be transmitted instantaneously. The *objectified state* of cultural capital is represented by cultural goods, material objects such as books, computers, instruments, or machines. They can be assigned both materially, with economic capital, and symbolically via embodied capital. Finally, cultural capital in its *institutionalized state* provides academic credentials and qualifications creating a “certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to power” (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). Subsequently, these academic qualifications can be employed as a rate of conversion between cultural and economic capital.

The aptitude of the individual is principally determined by the amount of time and cultural capital that is invested in them by their parents. At the same time, Bourdieu claims that “the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family” (Bourdieu, 1986: 244) which “starts at the outset” (Bourdieu, 1986: 246). According to this model, families of a given cultural capital could only produce offspring with an equal amount of cultural capital. This approach appears to be too inflexible and somewhat simplistic. How does Bourdieu account for those individuals who elevate their social status or increase their cultural capital from what they inherited? How does a given group with a specific cultural capital, particularly those from members of ethnic and migrant groups such as East African Sikhs, change and adapt if, as Bourdieu claims, it simply regenerates itself? Furthermore, of particular interest to this thesis is how members from these groups are able to use cultural capital? I focus on answering these questions later in this chapter after exploring the impact of Bourdieu’s work in educational research.

The third form of capital for Bourdieu is social capital and contains two elements. Firstly, it is a resource concerned with group membership and social networks; the amount of social capital an individual possesses “depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize” (Bourdieu, 1986: 249), including the network of extended family and friends. Secondly, social capital is reliant upon mutual recognition between members of the social network leading to such capital obtaining ‘symbolic character’ which can transform into ‘symbolic capital’, a form of symbolic

power which allows a certain degree of prestige. As Bourdieu points out, symbolic capital:

> "…is nothing other than capital, in whatever form, when perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the internalization (embodiment) of the structure of its distribution, i.e. when it is known and recognized as self-evident." (Bourdieu 1985: 204).

Symbolic capital can only make meaningful differences if it has a degree of legitimacy, through recognising and defining which forms of capital are important, and recognition that symbolic capital "only exists in the eyes of the others" (Çaglar 1995: 311).

In this way, through distinguishing between different forms of capital, Bourdieu rejects crude determinist notions of human action as passive, reflexive responses to conditioned stimuli. However, the structure of one's habitus, rather than allowing complete agency, points people towards certain choices and constrains others and, therefore, choices are constructed in terms of what an individual's habitus allows them.

1.4.3 Bourdieu and Educational Research

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital have been drawn upon heavily in much educational research with the notion of 'cultural capital particularly used to distinguish between the roles middle-class and working-class parents play in their children's aspirations, along with the resources and information

that they draw upon. For example, Crozier (2000) found that, despite both middle-class and working-class parents receiving poor information by the school regarding their children's education, middle-class parents, possessing greater capital, were in a better position to secure the knowledge that they required:

> "The habitus of middle-class parents, together with their high status and relatively valuable cultural and social experiences, has armed them with the requisite self-confidence and knowledge to approach the school and access the information they require about their children, or to intervene if necessary." (Crozier 2000: 60).

Although similar to a 'cultural-deficit' approach that was present in widening participation schemes, which sees deficiencies inherent within the working-class as an explanation for their academic failure, such an approach rejects notions of cultural deprivation, instead focusing on cultural differences between the classes and stressing how explanations are far more complex than these policies. As such, the middle-class are found to be the most 'able' choosers, whereas "working-class groups are often positioned, in research literature and policy statements, as unable to construct effective challenges" (Vincent 2001: 348). Middle-class parents are more likely to intervene in school affairs (Vincent, 2001); are more aware of the importance of extra-curricular activities (Brown and Hesketh, 2004); and can be seen as "more likely to encourage their children to progress in post-compulsory education"

(Archer 2003:9). Habitus here has been identified as intrinsic, as Vincent herself elucidates:

> "I suggest that these differences in values and approaches to education can be located as part of an overall habitus – how 'people like us' – with particular educational backgrounds, particular occupational pathways and living in particular places, think and act in relation to education." (Vincent 2001: 359).

The importance of habitus in making future choices has also been stressed by others. Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson (1996) introduce the notion of 'pragmatic rationality', whereby constructed choices are seen as a rational process for the chooser, located and constrained within their habitus. The significance of subjective judgement in the decision-making process is highlighted here emphasising the importance of how family background, culture, life history and social class can have an impact on the ideas, information and preconceptions drawn upon by young adults when constructing choice. They argue that technical rational approaches adopted within government policy, which see decision-making as a channel for making the *right* decision, rather than as a lasting process, ignore these complexities associated with culture and class. Furthermore, Hemsley-Brown (1999), in her study of post-16 college choice of young adults, found that while pupils often gave practical reasons for making choices, these were usually based upon pre-formed ideas, grounded within influences from family background, culture and life history – i.e. habitus. Choice here is still a rational process, occurring after supporting information has been collected.

Distinctions have also been found in the range of resources that parents use. Ball and Vincent (1998), exploring the 'grapevine' or the informal social networks parents draw upon when making choices, emphasise the importance of social class. The grapevine, or 'hot' knowledge, "based on affective responses or direct experience" (Ball and Vincent, 1998: 381), is perceived by parents to be more reliable than more 'official' or 'cold' information, such as examination results and school policies, and "different networks, different grapevines can and do exist within one small locality" (Ball and Vincent, 1998: 381). The grapevine is not simply equated with social class; although aspects of the grapevine are more likely to be found within particular social classes than in others, working-class parents are less likely to have the cultural resources to research 'cold' knowledge themselves and therefore more likely to be dependent upon their social networks for information and:

> "Without the networks it would be difficult to access the requisite information. The very nature of networks leads to spiralling: one piece of information, or one contact leads to another." (Crozier, 2000: 70).

Alongside the cultural capital of parents, social capital also contributes to the educational achievement of pupils (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) through the accumulation of knowledge about the education system. Thus, parents in this study, through using their social networks, were able to garner greater information about careers, organise work experience for their children, gaining 'real' information where they could ask questions.

Despite the reliance on Bourdieu's notions of capital and habitus, the usefulness of the concepts can be questioned. Bourdieu fails to show how children inherit the cultural capital of parents and to convincingly explain that it is through this mechanism that middle-class students do better at school than working-class students. As Lareau (1989) states:

> "Demonstrating that people possess highly valued cultural resources is only one part of the story. It fails to reveal which cultural resources individuals use when and with what effect or, put differently, how cultural resources are transformed into cultural capital." (Lareau, 1989: 179)

Therefore, as Sullivan (2001) argues, Bourdieu is not precise enough about which resources are associated with having cultural capital, how these resources are converted into educational credentials and how one can acquire cultural capital. Are such resources prevalent in every cultural, ethnic and social group? How do new migrant communities hope to gain such capital, enabling them with resources for upward mobility? Although the research on ethnic minorities and social capital is prodigious (e.g. Bruegel, 2006, Modood, 2004, Dwyer et al, 2006; Campbell and Mclean, 2002, 2003; Platt and Thompson, 2006; Zetter et al, 2006; Zhou, 2005), there has been a distinct lack of research on cultural capital and South Asians in Britain. Tariq Modood (2004) is one of the few, arguing that Bourdieu's theorisation of capital is limited as it is unable "to deal sociologically with some contemporary ethnic phenomena in relation to resources, capital and the

likelihood of mobility" (Modood, 2004: 88). Developing his argument further, Modood continues by asking:

> "…a major empirical question: why are non-white ethnic minorities in Britain so over-represented in applications to and amongst students in higher education? The fact that they are is so counter-intuitive that while British sociologists have developed several lines of inquiry to explain the scholastic under-achievement of non-whites (a phenomenon that has failed to occur, except in pockets) there are no theories to explain the phenomenon that has occurred." (Modood, 2004: 88)

Certainly, there is an over-reliance in educational research on class-based reasons for explaining such trends. Although I do not consider Bourdieu's notions of capital complete for explaining how aspirations are constructed, unlike Modood, I do not find the concepts of capital entirely without worth and consider them as having some credence for Sikhs in my study in particular.

In the interviews of participants in this study, rather than examples of each form of capital simply being highlighted, and distinguished between working- and middle-class parents, there was a blurring of boundaries. Parents were able to pool economic resources to buy their children computers and books and hire tutors. They heavily relied upon their social networks for information about educational routes, for organising work experience, and for careers advice; findings reported in other research on Asian parents (e.g. Crozier and Davies, 2006), highlighting how the use of social networks was not solely

‘classed’ but also ‘ethnicised’ (Ball, 2003). Despite some parents having the ‘wrong’ form of cultural capital, such as not possessing much knowledge about the education system, this did not inhibit them. Some working-class parents still attended school events, such as Parents’ Evenings and open days, communicated with teachers, and sought out information of their own via ‘cold’ forms of knowledge such as school and university league tables. Interestingly, some middle-class parents were reliant on their social networks for information alone and were reluctant to search for other forms of information themselves. However, rather than solely being employed for social class, gender and ethnicity can also provide capitals to be used as a resource, including, as explored earlier, forms of ‘hegemonic’ masculinity which could constrain certain options for young men, especially since these versions of masculinity were not constructed as academic in educational policy. Symbolic capital was also evident in other constructions of educational and occupational choices; the ‘right’ choices were framed in terms of notions of ‘izzat’, or family respect, for young women, and wider community discourses, where notions of competition with other families’ children were prevalent.

Consequently, as can be seen, notions of capital do have some use for exploring how Sikh parents make their decisions. However, there are other explanations, just as important when researching Sikh parents which can be linked to Bourdieu’s ideas, which I explore in the proceeding section.

1.44 Research on Asian Parents and Education

Compared with the above section on how parents are able to use their social class to benefit their children, this section explores literature concerning South Asian parents' experiences as a whole. As stated earlier, I draw upon research concerning 'Asians' as a whole since research on Sikhs is lacking. Many of the above studies, showing a distinction between middle-class and working-class parents, are certainly pertinent to South Asian parents. However, there are also certain intricacies, associated particularly with South Asians, which are also relevant, which would have been useful for education policies to address.

A principal reason for South Asian migration to Britain was so give families better opportunities (Ghuman, 1975) - what Mirza (1992) calls the 'migrant effect', referring to:

> "…the degree to which migrants themselves pursue the goal of upward occupational mobility, particularly for the next generation, by striving for educational achievement and qualifications." (Mirza, 1992: 174)

As such, Gupta (1977) found that Asian boys and girls expressed significantly higher educational as well as occupational aspirations than members of other ethnic groups which he linked, in part, to the role their parents played, cultural traditions and greater pressure for higher aspirations. Asian parents then viewed the education system in a favourable light, perceived as a means for upward social mobility (Brah, 1996), thereby increasing their symbolic capital in the community (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989,

1992). However, rather than simply seeing all Asian families in a homogeneous fashion, there were notable differences related, in part, to where Asians migrated to the UK from.

As I demonstrated earlier, there were distinct differences how parents interacted with the education system (Bhachu, 1990, Brah, 1996). East African Asians had greater "familiarity with colonial British institutions and urban life prior to migration in conjunction with their greater command of the English language" (Bhachu, 1990: 10) compared with those from rural areas, who were less likely to possess knowledge of the education system (Bains, 1988). Consequently, it can be argued that migrants from East Africa were more likely to have the 'right' type of capital, allowing them greater knowledge of the nuances of the British education system, including where to go for information and the various resources. They also drew upon their larger social networks when constructing aspirations and choices for their children, which was certainly the case in this study. However, this is not to suggest that such capitals were easily transferable to this country either; a new location meant that their habitus had to adapt in order to acquire new forms of capital.

Despite these differences based upon area of origin, there is a body of research which has found Asian parents to have a lack of knowledge about the British education system (e.g. Preece, 1999; Brooks, 2002; Bhatti, 1999; Haw, 1998; Siann and Khalid, 1990; Basit, 1996, 1997; Crozier, 2009), linking in with New Labour policy which has constructed such parents as not

possessing the requisite habitus and capitals, targeting them in widening participation schemes.

Indeed, high parental aspirations have been linked to a distinct lack of knowledge about various educational routes and types of occupation. For example, Siann and Khalid (1990) discovered that although Asian parents had high educational and occupational aspirations for their daughters, their lack of knowledge and restricted access to information meant they had little awareness of the range of possibilities open to them. Similarly, Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents in Dale et al's (2000) study, though supportive of their children's decisions, did not always appreciate that there were alternative non-academic routes to success. The apparent visibility of occupations can be seen to be important; parents are likely to want their children to enter a profession that they have most perceived 'knowledge' and 'understanding' of, even if their knowledge base is limited and confined to what they have learnt from members of their networks, highlighting their lack of cultural capital and dependence upon their social networks.

Nevertheless, this lack of knowledge has not prevented Asian parents from holding teachers in high regard; a stance reproduced from their countries of origin. Bhatti (1999), in her research on Asian children discovered, that parent's lack of knowledge meant that educational matters were left to 'professionals' and Crozier et al (2003), in their study on Bangladeshi and Pakistanis, found:

> "…parents did not express a need to know more and indicated a general satisfaction with their children's schools, the contact the school had with them and the amount of information they received from the school. The majority of parents believed their children were doing well academically and did not have any problems even though this was not usually the case." (Crozier et al, 2003: 4-5)

Parents "expressed a 'trust' in the schools and ...made limited demands on the school" (Crozier and Davies, 2007: 309) and, thus, their role in their children's education can be seen to be *non-interventionist* in nature, which has been misunderstood by school staff as not taking an interest (Bhachu, 1985; Crozier and Davies, 2006; Crozier and Davies, 2007; Crozier 2009). Findings also indicate that such parents believe they should not question the teacher's practices and expertise (Bhatti, 1999) and cultural constructions of a teacher's role are evident.

Explanations for Asian parents' lack of knowledge relate to how their own experiences of the education system, in their country of origin, varied to those of their children. Many parents lacked knowledge about how the education system functioned in Britain and felt awkward about approaching the school for information (Bhatti, 1999; Crozier and Davies, 2007; Crozier, 2009) and this can be seen as possessing a lack of transferable cultural capital. Other research on both Asian parents (Bhatti, 1995), and Muslim parents (Haw, 1998), has supported these findings, discovering that such

parents have been intimidated by their inability to fully understand how the education system functioned, particularly in larger secondary schools. One possible explanation offered is the lack of English some parents possessed. As Crozier et al (2003) found, both parents had insufficient command of the English language and did not feel confident about speaking to their children's teachers; they found Parents' Evenings less beneficial as conversations were difficult and constraints of time meant that they received less quality information. Consequently:

> "Most Bangladeshi parents knew very little about the education system or what their children did in school or how they were progressing. Some parents were not aware for example of the assessment system in schools or the system of setting and the implications of this." (Crozier et al, 2003: 4)

Furthermore, Crozier et al (2003) and Crozier and Davies (2007) found that young adults did not pass on information to their parents about their progress or about school events, including parents' evening; another barrier to parental involvement. This prevented parents from developing an understanding of their children's performance and gaining knowledge and familiarity with the school and its requirements. In a similar vein, Bhatti (1999), in her study exploring Asian children at home and school, illuminated the difficulties that such students have bridging the school and home. At times, they would not tell their parents about school functions because of embarrassment about the way they speak and behave, and how this did not 'fit in' within the school environment - another form of cultural capital.

Such findings, however, are not prevalent for all Asian parents. Research by Dosanjh and Ghuman (1997) on the changing roles of Asian parents in their children's education discovered important differences between first- and second-generation parents. They found that second-generation parents invest greater participation in their children's education than their first generation counterparts did since they had been through the education system themselves, had greater understanding of the processes, and understood the importance of their contribution.

There is a lack of research on how social class has an impact upon different Sikh groups, which this empirical research seeks to shed light on since most research has explored Asians from the working-class. In this study, parents who had migrated from India were likely to have different forms of knowledge about the education system - those from rural backgrounds, predominantly working-class, were likely to have less knowledge, and those from urban backgrounds, generally middle-class, possessed more. Families where the mother was from East Africa and the father from India were able to draw upon their higher cultural capital in order to help the child. However, cultural capital for all parents wherever they had migrated from was not transferable to the new location, and, thus, they found it harder to understand the nuances of the education system. Compared with East African parents, those from India were more likely to have problems communicating in English which had an impact upon how they interacted with teachers; they were more likely to draw upon members of their social network, such as aunts and

uncles, to communicate with the school and their lack of cultural capital was offset by their stronger social networks.

Despite their lack of English as a first language and their lack of formal education, South Asian parents have been found to place great emphasis on their children's education, giving the impression that they have unrealistically high aspirations (Anwar, 1998; Bhatti, 1999; Thornley and Siann, 1991; Tanna, 1990). Although the majority of Asian parents in Bhatti's (1999) study were in semi-skilled or unskilled employment, all the parents wanted their children to do well and encouraged them to aim for higher education. Anwar (1998) discovered Asian parents placed great importance on education as "education is valued highly within the community as a primary means of improving life chances and is regarded as a self-defining and personally empowering process" (Anwar, 1998: 35).

Other research has also found that parent's insufficient knowledge of the education system did not prevent them from having an insight into the world of work. Dale et al's (2000) study on Pakistani and Bangladeshi women's routes into the labour market found high-status positions were perceived as enhancing a family's symbolic capital, particularly important when finding their daughters a spouse. Furthermore, as Basit (1996) found, parents encouraged their children to enter HE and choose professional careers, as they thought this would enable their children to surmount racial prejudices that they themselves faced.

Research has found teachers and educational institutions as constructing the lack of ethnic minority parental involvement, coupled with communication issues, negatively. Parents' perceived 'lack of interest' and indifference in their children's education due to their lack of visibility at school events, such as Parents' Evening, have been presented as the source of the problem in some research (Basit, 1996; Basit, 1997; Bhatti, 1999). As Tomlinson (1990) argues:

> "Until recently, minority pupils and their parents have borne the brunt of explanations for their school achievements – often couched in terms of their supposed economic, cultural, linguistic or intellectual deficiencies, different family structures and community characteristics or lack of parental involvement in education." (Tomlinson, 1990: 337)

As such, research has indicated that Pakistani parents considered that teachers' had low expectations of their children (Crozier et al, 2003); Muslim parents believed teachers bullied their children into certain educational and occupational fields (Basit, 1996); and Asian parents were found to be made unwelcome and felt ignorant when they did attend school (Bhatti, 1999), homogenised and rendered invisible under the 'one size fits all approach (Crozier and Davies, 2007) and constructed against the ideal in policy. Consequently, such schools were "unwelcome spaces where few Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents have a voice" (Crozier and Davies, 2007: 311). These parents' habitus and capitals can therefore be said to be incompatible with the education field thereby leading to increased

disadvantage. It is here that parents had to rely on their social networks in order to offset experiences with the school. As Crozier et al (2003) and Crozier and Davies (2006) discovered, it was through making comparisons with the experience of relatives that parents observed that their children were not making progress, another advantage of having stronger social networks.

It is important to realise that not all schools and teachers have the same strategies for dealing with minority parents. Research by Wrigley (2000), on ten inner city schools and their attempts to aid Asian bilingual pupils to achieve success, focused on the various strategies that they employed. These included schools' efforts to increase Asian parents' participation through home visits where they could explain the school's structure and curriculum to parents which "help to overcome parental fears and develop trust and co-operation" (Wrigley, 2000: 171). Such initiatives had a reasonable level of success and helped to alleviate parents' fears about the school, making it easier for them to approach the school for information.

Such strategies were used by the school in this study. They printed literature in a number of languages so that parents could understand the information, mailed letters home and had teachers and translators fluent in other languages. However, these approaches, although increasing the parental participation, only resulted in limited success with many parents still unwilling to participate. Cultural factors were important; some parents constructed teachers as 'expert' in their accounts, based upon their own educational experiences. Hence, teachers were only to be spoken to if there were

problems with their children and parents did not attend school if there were no perceived problems. These cultural issues were lacking in government policy which could have helped with a greater understanding of why Asians parents had low rates of participation in schools.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I drew on research on Asians despite one rationale for this research being that there were too many important differences between various South Asian groups. The distinct lack of educational research focusing solely on Sikhs meant that I had to rely heavily on research concerning Asians as a whole, or on Muslim groups, which had a range of different research findings from those that found 'Asian' cultures to be restrictive, to others that granted their children more autonomy.

This chapter began by briefly exploring the history of Sikhs in order to place them in a historical, cultural and social context to highlight how Sikhs are not a homogeneous community, but instead delineated by social class, caste and area of origin; explorations of which are lacking in previous research. Next, the New Labour government's AimHigher programme was explored, which sought to widen participation to HE from 'non-traditional' groups. A number of criticisms of this policy were relevant, including how middle-class identity was constructed as the standard to be aimed for.

The proceeding section explored some identities of young adults which could be culturally located, particularly those concerning gender and 'izzat', which

structured boys and girls behaviour. Such identities acted as a form of symbolic capital, which could be accrued or lost. Next, I investigated constructions of masculinity, and, in particular, 'hegemonic' masculinity, which could position young men against the ethos of the school, limiting future options since they could be constructed as not possessing the requisite skills for academic success.

Subsequently, I explored Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field and capital. His ideas have been heavily drawn upon in recent educational research and were found to be useful for exploring the aspirations of Sikh young adults, in particular, how their habitus and field were intrinsic in allowing certain options to be considered, and others to be neglected. The final section of the chapter focused on research on Asians. Here, the role of Asian parents in their children's education, including their lack of English as a first language, was examined. Parents were found, in general, to be supportive despite not always having much knowledge about the education system.

The research outlined above indicates there is a need for this empirical study, exploring "What are the educational and occupational aspirations of a small sample of Sikh young adults?', and research aims employed to answer this principal question were to:

1) Explore how educational and occupational aspirations are interrelated?

2) Explore which resources do Sikh parents, young adults, and their teachers draw upon when constructing such aspirations and why are certain resources used over others?
3) Explore how aspirations are constructed within each cluster of parent, teacher and young adult?
4) Shed some light upon how some British-Sikh identities are constructed.
5) Examine the stereotypical view of 'Asian' parents as having unrealistically high aspirations for their children.

The following chapter is the second literature review chapter in which I explore the theoretical perspectives I draw upon as part of my 'syncretic' social constructionist approach, including cultural identity theories, which help to answer these questions. Furthermore, I attempt to resolve some tensions with having such a diverse set of theoretical standpoints as part of this 'syncretic' approach.

CHAPTER 2:

DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF ASPIRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This second chapter of the thesis serves to build upon the issues identified in the previous chapter. From the wide spectrum of literature reviewed, concerning both Asians and educational research on aspirations, a number of questions were identified which require further investigation, including how the AimHigher programme contains a set of assumptions concerning identity, which require unpacking if there is to be an appreciation of the impact they can have on the construction of aspirations.

In this chapter, I attempt to develop a theoretical approach which is appropriate for answering these questions – a broad constructionist approach which partly draws upon, but moves beyond, discursive psychological and Foucauldian approaches, to a 'syncretic' constructionism which includes Bourdieu's (1985, 1989, 1992) notions of capital, habitus and field, alongside how gender, ethnicity, religion, caste and social class have an impact upon subject-positions (Hall, 1990; Brah 1996; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). Moreover, this approach includes theorists who focused on performances of gender from the previous chapter, including Skeggs (1997, 2004) and Connell (1995), and how young adults can gain cultural and symbolic capitals through their constructions of gender.

Some recent research on aspirations and educational choice has been quantitative (e.g. Connors et al, 2003; DeWitt et al, 2010; Strand, 2007), employing larger sample sizes to explore different identities which impact upon aspirations. Although I consider this research to be useful, shedding light on the impact of social class, gender and ethnicity on young adults' futures, further qualitative research is required to provide more in-depth data, delving into the complexities of these processes, especially for Sikhs, and how cultural nuances can have a role to play on the construction of identities.

As such, I draw upon and foreground Bourdieu in my small sample, qualitative study because his ideas permit an exploration of the habitus of individuals, and empahsise the importance of social class, which had a significant impact upon resources that individuals drew upon. Notions of habitus and capitals are related to the 'intersectionality' (Anthias, 2001; Brah and Phoenix, 2004) of gender, social class, caste and ethnicity, which although I consider as social constructs, shifting according to context, I draw upon Hall (1990) and Brah (1996) to argue that identities also contain a degree of fixity. Members of a group are then able to share a global identity, an identification which transgresses physical borders, whilst also retaining a degree of fluidity, shifting and adapting to new social and cultural contexts, and alongside, and against, members of the 'diaspora space'. These identities can have an impact upon the resources individuals are able to draw upon when constructing aspirations and identities, and, also, how and why they are unofficially constructed against the 'ideal' in widening participation policies.

Firstly, I explore some quantitative approaches to aspirations and education. Earlier studies concern 'personality-matching' theories (Holland, 1959; 1985), where the individual's personality predisposes them to certain careers, and developmental models (Ginzberg et al, 1951; Super, 1957; Gottfredson, 1981), where an individual progresses through a range of stages in order to make an informed career choice. More recent quantitative educational studies on future aspirations and choices (e.g. Strand, 2007; Strand and Winston, 2008, Bhavnani, 2006) are an improvement over earlier models, employing larger samples to explore social class, gender and ethnicity, and their impact upon future aspirations.

Secondly, I explore some qualitative, social constructionist approaches which have been drawn upon in recent educational research which place greater emphasis on multiple truths and social, cultural and historical contexts (Burr, 1995). 'Bottom-up' discursive psychological perspectives (e.g. Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Edwards, 1999; Wetherell, 1998), focusing on the rhetorical effects of language to construct the world, and 'top-down' Foucauldian notions of power discourse and subject-positions (e.g. Foucault, 1967, 1972, 1977, 1980; Burman and Parker, 1993; Parker, 1992), are explored. Although I consider these social constructionist approaches useful, they contrast with Bourdieu's conceptualisations of habitus, field and capitals which are crucial in this thesis to exploring the resources participants employed when constructing aspirations and identities. As such, I explore

some tensions with drawing upon Foucault and Bourdieu and how I resolve them for this study.

The next section concerns notions of positioning and ‘intersectionality’ which are drawn upon by Stuart Hall and Avtar Brah to draw attention to how although identities contain a stable quality, allowing members to identify with each other, they are also in a state of flux, changing according to social and cultural contexts, and are intersected by race, ethnicity, social class, caste and gender. These conceptualisations of identities are considered as complementing Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, helping to explain how young adults’ identities shift and vary from those of their parents and peers.

The penultimate section of the chapter explores the notion of reflexivity, significant in this study since I was bringing particular assumptions through being a former student at the school and as I was studying my ‘own’ Sikh group. These assumptions had a unique bearing upon how I interpreted phenomena and had to be acknowledged in order to bring greater transparency to the research. I conclude the chapter with a summary of my theoretical position.

2.1 QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ASPIRATIONS/ EDUCATION

In this section, I explore some quantitative approaches to the study of education and aspirations since this study is, in part, positioned against such approaches. Although these studies have contributed much to the study of aspirations and I attempt to build upon some of their findings in this study, they are critiqued - earlier career models are considered deterministic, pathologising individual's choices into fixed options, and more recent quantitative studies, despite focusing on social class, gender and ethnicity, cannot explore how these identities intersect, are context-based, and can be linked to nuances of culture which are crucial for understanding how the aspirations and identities of Sikh young adults are constructed. Despite the importance of these quantitative studies, this study adopts a different theoretical approach to investigate the construction of aspirations, where the focus explores these issues and a smaller sample is employed to acquire more in-depth data.

2.11 Developmental and 'Personality-Matching' Approaches

Two main psychological approaches to the study of careers have been outlined by Moir (1993) which have focused on uncovering underlying psychological structures which determine occupational choices. The first theory, concerning 'personality-matching', relied on psychometric testing in order to predict occupational choice. Here, Holland's (1959, 1985) model was important and focused on 'modal personal orientation', where an individual's personality better predisposes them to certain occupations and work

environments, resulting in greater job satisfaction. Six personality types were proposed by Holland: ‘Realistic’, ‘Investigative’, ‘Artistic’, ‘Social’, ‘Enterprising’ and ‘Conventional’. People who belong within each type tend to work together in similar work environments of the same name.

The second principal psychological approach to the study of careers, as outlined by Moir (1993), has predominantly employed interviews in order to discover a range of ‘developmental’ stages that individuals progress through when choosing their vocations. Such theories have been characterised by the research of Ginzberg et al (1951) and Super (1957). Ginzberg et al’s (1951) theory of occupational choice contained three stages beginning in the ‘fantasy’ stage, continuing through the ‘tentative’ stage into the final ‘realistic’ stage where choices are finalised and the educational pathways to achieve this are decided upon.

These theories have certainly been important and, as Osipow (1990) points out, have been used to formulate careers advice policies in schools. However, there are a number of issues with such approaches which are certainly pertinent for this study. The structure of the model is always questionable since the social and cultural contexts, imperative for this study, can be ignored and, thus, there is a degree of simplicity with both ‘personality-matching’ and ‘developmental’ models. These contexts, rather than solely focusing on the individual, will also include others, such as peers and members of their family who can have an impact upon aspirations, from

acting as a source of information, to providing financial and emotional support.

Furthermore, individuals are often pathologised as such explanations are uniformly applied, thereby 'normalising' them, Thus, there is a failure to sufficiently account for the role that gender, race, ethnicity and social class can play on the construction of aspirations. Each of these 'intersect' together in unique and different ways, according to social and cultural context, and can have an impact upon the construction of aspirations, opening up certain options and limiting others, whilst allowing certain resources to be employed. Therefore, personality theories can be seen as reductionist, reducing the complex process future decision-making process into a straightforward and uncomplicated explanation.

2.12 Quantitative Studies on Educational and Occupational Aspirations

More recent research on educational and occupational aspirations has been quantitative, exploring the role of gender, social class and ethnicity on aspirations and on widening participation to HE, a significant improvement on personality-matching theories since they have focused on the impact of parental income, education and socio-economic status (e.g. Blanden and Gregg, 2004; Gayle, 2004), and how educational attainment varies according to ethnicity, gender and social class differences (e.g. Demack et al, 2000). Important in this discussion, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is how girls are 'outperforming' boys in school at GCSE level despite the gender gap

in employment increasing (Machin and McNally, 2005). Findings vary from those that argue that girls have higher aspirations than boys (e.g. Schoon et al, 2007), to those that claim such differences are marginal (e.g. Addams and Johnson, 2005). Girls have also been found to have lower academic self-concepts as compared with boys (Strand and Winston, 2008), particularly in Maths (e.g. Wilgenbusch and Merrell, 1999), and be constricted by gender role stereotypes and perceptions of sexism (e.g. Eccles, 2005), and the age of entry into motherhood (e.g. Schoon et al, 2007). Such findings have been linked to social class (e.g. Willits et al, 2005; Schoon and Parsons, 2002), where both young adults (e.g. The Prince's Trust, 2004) and parents (e.g. Willits et al, 2005) from higher social classes are likely to have higher aspirations.

Ethnicity could also be important and ethnic minority parents have been found to hold higher educational aspirations for their children (e.g. Strand, 2007; Willits et al, 2005) and having a significant impact in their education, particularly South Asians (e.g. Bhavnani, 2006), despite research finding some parents showed trepidation when approaching teachers, particularly at Parents' Evening (e.g. Cullingford and Morrison, 1999). However, discrepancies have been found by Bhavnani (2006) in an EOC study on ethnicity and gender; ethnic minority girls were more likely to expect to go to university compared with white girls, with Black Caribbean and white boys having the lower expectations. Similar findings, exploring the variations between different ethnic groups, were found in Higher education (Connor et

al, 2003), and in primary school children's interest in Science (DeWitt et al, 2010).

Other research has stressed the importance of ethnicity for young adults' aspirations (e.g. Connors et al, 2003; Majoribanks, 2003; Kingdon and Cassen, 2007) which cross-cut gender and social class. Although these parents scored highly on behaviours and attitudes associated with learning and higher aspirations, they were found to lack career information (Strand, 2007), highlighting how government initiatives like the Connexions service were not fulfilling all their objectives; greater cooperation with parents and carers was meant to be a fundamental concern to ensure that young adults were supported, helping them to realise their aspirations.

These studies have helped to shed light on the impact of various forms of identity on aspirations and future choices, allowing a broader picture of how they are constructed and which factors, including ethnicity, social class and gender, have an influence on them. As such, results from these larger samples have drawn attention to underperforming groups, allowing them to be targeted, especially by government widening participation policies. For example, Vignoles et al (2008), in a study for the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), explored ethnic minority participation in HE, finding those from disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to attend HE if they had poor academic qualifications during their GCSEs and A Levels.

Since these quantitative studies seek answers to different questions, they do not glean 'rich' data to investigate a deeper understanding of how social and cultural contexts and nuances can have a significant impact upon the resources which individuals are able to use when constructing aspirations and identity. Consequently, there could not be an exploration of *why* certain aspirations are constructed and the dynamics of *how* gender, ethnicity and social class can have a role to play, intersecting and cross-cutting each other in a myriad of complex ways, allowing a range of resources to be drawn upon. This is especially significant when exploring widening participation policies such as the AimHigher programme where certain identities, including those based around 'hegemonic' masculinity, are constructed unofficially against the 'ideal' in policy, and other identities which stress 'good' behaviour and hard work, are considered more necessary for educational success. Similarly, quantitative data can only provide a particular perspective on why certain parents are constructed as not possessing the requisite resources in order to provide their children with advice and support in order to make informed choices and realise their aspirations. It is here where there is a need for qualitative research and I consider Bourdieu's notions of capital and habitus valuable for this task, helping to bridge the gap between cultural issues and demographics, and for explaining the various social and cultural resources parents were able to draw upon to help their children.

Furthermore, as I explore with some of the participants in this study, there is a danger with constructing groups as homogeneous since some working-class students and parents, for example, did employ resources associated

with the middle-class, including ‘cold’ forms of knowledge (Ball and Vincent, 1998). As such, there is a need for smaller-scale qualitative studies which explore these issues, grounding them within historical, social and cultural contexts, and emphasising how behaviours and attitudes are not static, but fluid, varying according to these contexts. An acknowledgment of this would be especially useful for government policies on widening participation, providing new information which could influence how policies are shaped and administered to young adults.

2.2 QUALITATIVE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ASPIRATIONS/ EDUCATION

Although the above approaches did focus on ethnicity, social class and gender they did not seek to explore how these intersected and cross-cut each other, alongside cultural nuances, which a significant impact upon the resources they allowed individuals to draw upon. Since these factors were considered important in this study, a new approach was required. This alternative approach would be qualitative, producing 'rich' data which builds on these quantitative studies to shed light on the importance of social and cultural nuances and contexts and the role that different identities play, including their complex intersections, when constructing aspirations. Furthermore, this approach would require an investigation of how identities are fluid, constructed and varying according to context; crucial for this study since they can impact upon which options are open to young adults, particularly through how they are constructed in educational policies.

A broad social constructionist approach was decided upon to reflect these concerns, which some recent educational research on future aspirations and choices has drawn upon. This position is difficult to define since it serves as an 'umbrella' term, drawing inspiration from several different disciplines in the social sciences as well as philosophy and linguistics, where both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches are employed to explore phenomena at the micro- and macro-level. Broadly speaking, this theoretical approach rejects positivist ideas of a singular truth obtained through facts to produce an objective reality. Instead, there is an acknowledgement that multiple truths

exist, specific to, and constructed within, social, cultural and historical contexts rather than a vacuum (Burr, 1995), an increased focus on the individual's talk (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1992), and the role of power in any interaction (e.g. Parker, 1992; Burman and Parker, 1993).

These frameworks have been drawn upon in recent educational research when exploring widening participation policies in relation to working-class men (e.g. Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Archer, Pratt and Phillips, 2001), gender identity and education (Francis, 1998; Francis, 2007; Francis et al, 2008), and the intersections of social class, gender and ethnicity (e.g. Francis and Archer, 2005; Wong, 2012, Archer, Hutchings and Ross, 2003; Archer, 2003). A range of approaches have been employed, some employing discursive psychological perspectives focusing on language, others drawing upon Foucauldian notions of power, and several taking a 'syncretic' approach, combining these two forms of social constructionism. In this section, I briefly explore two of these principal approaches, from 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' perspectives, before reviewing some educational literature based upon these approaches.

2.21 'Bottom-Up' Discursive Psychological Approaches

Discursive psychology, drawing upon ethnomethodology and speech act theory, stresses the importance of language and how individuals employ it as a functional tool to construct their own versions of the social world (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1998; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Edwards, 1997, 2005; Potter and Edwards, 1999; Potter, 1996a, 1996b; Wetherell, 1998).

Recognising that multiple versions of a single phenomenon exist, there is a greater concern with *why* certain constructions are formed and *how* these constructions are able to *do* certain things, rather than an attempt to find a universal 'truth'. Since this study does not draw upon notions of discourse nor expressly focus on the rhetorical effects of language, I outline some key aspects which I find useful for my 'syncretic' social constructionism, rather than a detailed exploration, and how this theoretical perspective has been drawn upon more generally in educational research.

Potter's (1996a) notion of 'stake was considered important, referring to the interest an individual has in a particular issue and 'dilemmas of stake', present in any construction, which are a means to understanding how certain descriptions come into being and concern how a person's talk or actions are constructed as if they have a vested interest in the possible outcomes. There are two distinct clusters of such practices according to Potter (1996a) and the first practice is of particular interest to this study. This involves different constructions of the social actor, including constructions of how they take interest/disinterest in a subject, and the building up of category entitlements, which is the authority an individual possesses because of their 'expert' status on the topic to speak about certain issues which "in practice category entitlement obviates the need to ask how the person knows" (Potter, 1996a: 132). Category entitlement then, is the strategic utilisation of categories, constructed to provide authenticity to knowledge within a context, and a degree of accountability for the description. Here, there are a range of rhetorical devices which the individual can draw upon depending upon how

they wish to construct themselves. ‘Stake management’ highlights how a speaker can have an interest or ‘stake’ in something which may undermine the objectivity of their account. To counteract such claims, the speaker can draw upon ‘stake confession’, to acknowledge and bring to the fore their interest, and ‘stake inoculation’ where the individual can refute claims of interest before they are challenged. Furthermore, the social actor can use ‘footing’ as a resource where they can construct themselves as the source for some knowledge, or present it as from someone else, shifting their position depending upon their argument and how accountable they wish to construct themselves. Thus, in everyday constructions of ‘reality’, rhetorical strategies can be offensive, through ‘category entitlement’, or defensive, through the rhetorical strategies of ‘stake confession’, ‘stake inoculation’ and ‘footing’ in order to construct accounts as ‘fact’ and unproblematic, and used so that the individual can present themselves in different ways (Potter, 1996a).

Despite not focusing expressly on these linguistic devices, ‘stake’ was useful as it allowed me to explore what certain participants had to gain from adopting a particular stance in their interviews and this was tied in with other aspects of my ‘syncretic’ constructionist approach. For example, the culturally located positions individuals adopted could allow them to gain symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989, 1992) through criticising others to legitimise their own position. However, I regard Potter’s position, that the individual has greater autonomy over their constructions, debatable. I consider the use of language, and thereby the constructions made, as framed within a particular social and cultural context which allows and prohibits the actions of the

individual. Consequently, one can question whether it is possible for the individual to have complete agency over what they intend to do with their accounts. It is here where I find Bourdieu's notion of habitus more useful to explain the agency and structure available to the individual.

Habitus, for Bourdieu, refers to the socially acquired internalised schemes through which individuals are able to make sense of the world. Rather than people having absolute agency, their social experiences and their accounts are embedded within their habitus, reproducing a version of the social world that although possibly unintended, becomes internalised resulting in particular forms of behaviour. How an individual's habitus is structured will vary according to historical and cultural contexts, and, therefore is useful for explaining how and why certain forms of identity are constructed over others, intersected by social class, gender and ethnicity, which I investigate later in this chapter. Additionally, I find his analytical term useful for explaining how young adults in this study had a different habitus to those of their parents and how, rather than remaining static, contained potential for change.

Other rhetorical devices were also considered useful - language, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), can be used by individuals to perform 'face' and 'politeness' to present themselves. Performing 'face' consists of two aspects: the first, being unrestricted in the actions one can perform, is seen as the 'negative' face; the second, referring to being approved off by others, is the 'positive' face. For Brown and Levinson, our daily interactions see a range of 'face' threatening acts and we are compelled to employ a range of politeness

strategies through using language. Positive politeness is designed to perform actions such as ‘complimenting’ or showing concern for another person in order to present a positive ‘face’. Alternatively, negative politeness is employed in order to protect the other person when face is threatened. Such theoretical terms were certainly evident in this thesis; participants used ‘face’ and ‘politeness’ to construct positive and negative identities for themselves and others during interviews - an important tool for constructing identities. Using such strategies tied in with Bourdieu’s symbolic capital (1985, 1989, 1992) and could give participant’s an elevated status which could be socially and culturally constructed and located.

2.22 Discursive Approaches to Educational Research

Discursive psychological approaches have been drawn upon both in educational research, particularly focusing on Maths and Science subjects, as well on the constructions of both masculine and feminine identity. For example, Hsu and Roth (2006) drew upon the notion of ‘interpretative repertoires’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1992) to analyse science teachers’ talk and how they discussed the subject with students which could have an impact upon students’ images of the subject. Hsu et al (2009) identified four interpretative repertoires science students employed to justify possible career choices and construct particular science-related identities. Furthermore, the contributors in Hsu and Roth’s (2010) book on careers in science all used a variety of discourse analytical approaches to explore students’ talk and their careers, exploring the interpretative repertoires individuals drew upon to construct their future careers and, simultaneously, forms of identity.

Culturally located interpretative repertoires were employed by Hernandez-Martinez et al (2008) to investigate FE Maths students' 'talk' when constructing future aspirations. Although intersections of class, gender and ethnicity were explored, their approach used 'culture' generically, without due reference to the various differences, often important, between various ethnic groups. I consider resources used in the construction of aspirations, including Bourdieu's notion of habitus and capitals, as being socially and culturally located, and intersected by gender, social class, caste and ethnicity, employable not only in the construction of aspirations, but also in forms of identity, shifting between generations as I demonstrate in the data chapters.

These studies were considered useful exploring how the language students employed was located within particular contexts, and were therefore considered more useful than quantitative studies on aspirations. However, although the intersections of different identities were explored, each of these were inscribed with their own unique forms of power in different contexts and, consequently, a second discursive analysis approach, concerning the ideas of Michel Foucault and his theorisation of power, is often drawn upon in other educational research to readdress this.

2.23 A 'TOP-DOWN' FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH

Foucault (1967, 1972, 1977, 1980) has had a major impact upon the social sciences in general and a smaller, yet growing, influence on educational research (e.g. Francis and Archer, 2005; Francis, 2009). His notion of

discourse, placing an increased focus upon the role of power in any construction and upon the subject-positions that we adopt, allows an exploration of identity construction. If the assumptions from the above section, that language is not neutral but instead active in constructions of the world, are to be drawn upon, then there has to be an exploration of the diversity of constructions. Versions of the world, constructed through language, all have varying degrees of access to power, highlighting inequalities as well as reflecting the structures of power inherent within society.

Foucault's (1970, 1972, 1977) archaeological approach traces discourses through various historical periods, rejecting any notions of fixed unities and instead places the history of discontinuities at the centre of any analysis. In this way, rather than something that is to be explained away, the discontinuous becomes the 'object' of research itself. Discourse, from his perspective, is fundamental to understanding his concepts of power and the subject and is located within socio-historical contexts and can be seen as a tool that enables certain forms of behaviour and prohibits others, structured through socially, culturally and historically available discourses. Locating a discourse within a social, historical and cultural context means that inequalities will be present since knowledge and power are intimately linked together through a range of discursive tools, ultimately bound in the formation of discourse – where there is knowledge, there will invariably be power where certain forms of behaviour are favoured and others are marginalised. These inequalities, and the unequal access to power and knowledge, have a real

impact on how people are positioned in society, shaping and structuring practice and behaviour and limiting agency.

However, Foucault continues by stating that power will always face resistance – where power exists, so does resistance which is "never in a position of exteriority to power" (Foucault, 1976: 95) and, thus, is a necessary element of power itself, helping it to stay productive and giving the individual potential for agency in how they position themselves within discourses in society. Windows for agency are thereby created to be practiced by the individual at the micro-level where they have great responsibility for self-control and discipline and take "responsibility for the constraints of power" (Foucault, 1977: 202) allowing them to perform certain actions and behaviours. In this way, power is infused with structure, operating through relationships while agency concerns the opportunities for action of which plural forms exist.

This leads onto the final point of his which has influenced cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall – his theorisation of the subject. Foucault was particularly concerned with how subjects were a production of different historical discursive formations and power relations. For Foucault, once we speak or act from a particular position, it is located within a particular discursive formation and individuals are then placed within a constant process of evaluation alongside accepted forms of behaviour within society – the 'normalizing gaze', "a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish" (Foucault, 1977: 184). Locating the subject within these

discursive formations leads to identities which, rather than remaining static, are in a constant process of being constituted and re-constituted across time and space. In this way, this perspective contrasts with some forms of discursive psychology where the individual has far more agency. Individual behaviour for Foucault is instead normalized and made to conform to a hierarchy of social norms, thereby proscribing autonomy and urging conformity.

Although Foucault's ideas have been drawn upon in much educational research to explore the construction of identities, I instead draw upon Hall's (1990) notion of subject-positions, which I explore later, finding it more useful for explaining the different positions which can be produced through a range of intersecting, and often competing, social structures, such as social class, race and gender. Thus, being located within a particular subject-position means that there the individual has varying levels of agency; different positions will enable and constrain different forms of behaviour. Identity, for Hall (1990), has a degree of fixity ('being'), as well as the fluidity to adapt and change ('becoming') to new contexts, and structured by habitus and different capitals, where social and cultural norms can be acknowledged, rather than complete agency over which forms of identity can be constructed. As such, future aspirations and identities are constructed within these boundaries, highlighting which options can be considered, and those that are not permissible. Furthermore, I find Bourdieu's conceptualisation of power in its symbolic form more useful than Foucault, particularly when exploring cultural

nuances and the power one can gain or lose from ‘izzat’ or family honour, which can have ‘real’ effects on individual’s aspirations and identities.

2.24 Foucauldian Approaches to Educational Research

Foucauldian notions of social constructionism, including the ideas of Parker (1992) and Burman and Parker (1993), have been influential in much educational research, drawn upon to explore ethnic identities and science education (e.g. Wong, 2012), gender and ethnicity (e.g. Francis et al, 2008), and the intersection of ethnicity, social class and gender (e.g. Francis and Archer, 2005; Francis, 2009).

Contemporary research in science education has found Foucault’s ideas to be particularly useful. Archer et al’s (2010) longitudinal study on young adults’ attitudes to science drew upon a Foucauldian discourse analytical approach to explore the resources participants drew upon, analysed these as a practice of power. Themes which developed during participants’ talk were intersected by gender, social class and racialised discourses allowing an understanding of how and why students construct science and scientists in particular ways. Phipps (2007) investigated the under-representation of women in science, engineering and technology and drew upon the Foucauldian notions of subject-positions to explore how they are positioned by dominant discourses in the field, an area which is usually identified with men. Furthermore, Wong (2012) drew upon a Foucauldian analysis of discourse in his case study analysis of two 13 year old British Asian girls. Cultural discourses employed by their families and peers, along with their

teachers expectations, had an impact upon these students' perceptions of science and education.

Positioning of subjects was also important for Bhavnani (2006) in her study on women's identities in Singapore and Britain, investigating how professional women's identities were changing in their workplace, particularly concerning their gender and ethnicity. Policies and historical and cultural discourses constructed different identities for these women in the two countries, defining and limiting their roles. Similar findings with regards to the importance and variety of the subject-positions one can adopt were found by Francis and Archer's (2005) in their study on British-Chinese students. They demonstrated how boys resisted constructions of the 'good Chinese pupil' through lesser forms of 'laddish' behaviour which did not have a negative impact upon their learning whereas British-Chinese girls were constructed as passive and hard-working by teachers. Despite being academically successful, these girls were constructed as problematic, their high achievement a consequence of their 'strict' home culture, and their passivity preventing them from participating in class.

Other educational research has taken a more 'syncretic' discursive approach, combining aspects of discursive psychology, alongside Foucauldian notions of power, to explore gender (e.g. Francis, 1999), and the intersections of gender, social class and ethnicity (e.g. Archer, 2001; Archer, Pratt and Phillips, 2001; Archer, 2003; Archer and Francis, 2007). Greater realism was stressed in these studies, with increased emphasis on the impact of

constructions. For example, Archer (2003), in her study on young working-class Muslim men, found that the 'talk' of these young men had 'real' effects for the identities they constructed, particularly when they discussed hegemonic forms of masculinity concerning violence and 'hardness'. Their religious identities were also emphasised over ethnic and national identities to resist constructions of the 'weak Asian' and, as Archer suggested, this, tied in with their masculinity could lead to especially virulent forms of identity. Archer also drew upon Bourdieu to argue that although individuals in her study had agency to negotiate identity positions, they were constrained by various social inequalities such as gender and social class which were structured and defined through their habitus. Her later work develops these ideas further, bridging forms of identity construction with habitus. For Archer et al (2010), identities are produced through individuals' performances and structured by social and cultural contexts, and Bourdieu's concept of habitus is employed to explain this. Although the focus in their study is on individual's attitudes to, and aspirations within, science education, drawing upon both these theoretical approaches allows Archer et al to shed light on how the individual is socially and culturally constructed within the family context and the impact this has upon various resources they are able to draw upon when constructing science.

Bourdieu and Foucault's different theoretical positions mean that there are contradictions inherent in drawing upon them both, and I explore some of these issues in the next section.

2.25 BOURDIEU AND FOUCAULT: POWER, STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

Although I do, in part, draw on Foucault, crucially for this study, his notion of power largely excludes any mention of social class and how some individuals are able to retain power whilst others lose it. It is here where I find Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1990) notions of 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field', which were explored in the previous chapter, particularly useful. He places greater emphasis on how power is connected to various forms of habitus and capital and employed within certain social and cultural fields, including within the family and educational institutions, which I consider especially important for explaining how young adults construct their future aspirations and forms of identity. Since Bourdieu cross-cuts several different approaches, like Foucault, he is harder to position within a theoretical framework. However, I would argue that he can be considered as a 'structural constructionist'. Rather than proposing simple taxonomies, present within an existing social reality, Bourdieu argues that they have to be "conquered, constructed and established" (Bourdieu, Passeron and Chamboredon, 1991: 24), interpreted and understood through the 'habitus' of the researcher, and the 'field' in which this is located. Consequently, the shared social understandings that individuals' possess, the constructionist aspect of his theory, are framed within, and constrained by, external structures within society. Although individuals are permitted to construct versions of their own world, such constructions are firmly located within structures present within society and, therefore, individuals do not have complete agency over how they may construct their world. Thus, although there is 'construction' in Bourdieu's perspective, it differs from the traditional tenets of social constructionism;

there is greater ‘grounding’ with his theoretical ideas, as social spaces are not considered as textual constructs.

Drawing upon the ideas of Bourdieu and Foucault will invariably lead to tensions as the positions have been considered as incongruous with each other, and many aspects of their work are, particularly when exploring issues of structure and agency. However, I consider the two approaches as also having points of congruence, especially when considering how certain forms of identity are constructed over others. For Foucault, discourse acts as a form of structure over individuals’ experiences, perceptions and practices, whereas for Bourdieu, it is habitus which structures identities; the organisation of different capitals within a person’s habitus, varying according to their social and cultural background, permit certain forms of behaviour and restrict others. Employing these theoretical frameworks does present challenges, including issues concerning the function of language and realism versus constructivism debate. The intention here is not to resolve these issues, but to discuss how these tensions can be brought together for this research.

As noted earlier, power acts as a disciplinary force for Foucault, pervading through all aspects of society, functioning outside of agency or structure, and permitting certain forms of behaviour and constraining others as it produces “domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1979: 194). Compared with Foucault, Bourdieu theorises power as a construct, culturally and symbolically created and legitimised, and, through the constant interplay of

agency and structure, it assumes a ‘symbolic’ form and is internalised into the habitus of the individual.

Symbolic power is the “power of constituting the given through utterances” (Bourdieu, 1991: 170) and can be found in all facets of society, even “in places where it is least visible, where it is most completely misrecognized” (Bourdieu, 1994: 163). Such “invisible power...can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu, 1994: 164). Rather than something ‘tangible’ with ‘real’ effects, symbolic power, although possessed by the individual, can be seen as something that can be transformed, enabling other forms of capital (e.g. cultural, social, economic) to have a symbolic value or power which can be acquired or lost since “agents possess power in proportion to their symbolic capital, i.e. in proportion to the recognition they receive from the group” (Bourdieu, 1994: 164). Using symbolic power against others can lead to ‘symbolic violence’ – a form of social and cultural domination imposing a particular version of the world over others.

According to Bourdieu, there are two conditions through which symbolic power comes to the fore. The first, involves the possession of symbolic capital and how this is granted to individuals who have obtained recognition through occupying a position for a lengthy period of time. The second condition concerns how symbolic power has a ‘real’ impact through language and this is achieved “through knowledge and recognition (connaissance and

reconnaissance)" (Bourdieu, 1989: 23) by members involved. Thus, symbolic power can be employed by those who possess symbolic capital in society, as recognised by members of a group, in order to bring change or maintain the status quo. Everyday symbolic conflicts can occur either at an individual level or between different groups, thereby moving beyond reductionist Marxist arguments which focus on serving class interests, to one where there is greater emphasis placed upon those who produce power.

Although I partly draw upon Foucault's notion of power, particularly with how he has influenced cultural identity theorists such as Hall and Brah, symbolic power was certainly evident in narratives of participants, particularly parents. The social and cultural capital that some middle-class parents' possessed, such as their greater knowledge about the education system, gave them greater symbolic capital in the local community over other parents who did not possess similar resources. In line with Bourdieu, this symbolic power could be increased for parents, for example through their children achieving high academic grades or attending a prestigious university.

As already established, Foucault's impact in the field of cultural identity is considered useful for this thesis, but his ideas on the discursive positioning of subjects could help to explain how some young adults are constructed in educational policy as 'rational choosers' and how they are able to resist these various constructions. However, the ambiguity in Foucault's theorisation of resistance, and how he does not examine social and cultural contexts, negates the usefulness of his theory for this study; the various capitals that

class, gender, ethnicity and caste allow individuals to draw upon are not produced in a vacuum and are crucial for exploring the resources employed in constructing future aspirations. Such social categories are also important for the middle-class students in this study who most match the 'rational chooser' ideal through long-term future planning, with various issues, including cultural constructions of gender based around notions of 'izzat', coming to the fore.

Instead of Foucault's theoretical framework, I consider Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital more useful to explain how young adults' resisted negative constructions in educational policies through their habitus and capitals they were able to draw upon, constructing forms of identity where context was important and foregrounded. Such resistance occurred in particular contexts, for example, some young men resisted the 'right' form of behaviour for widening participation policies, including academic work, through performing hegemonic forms of masculinity; a form of cultural capital within their peer group giving them greater symbolic power and status which was not transferable to other contexts.

Differences also exist in how Bourdieu and Foucault conceptualise the function of structure and agency in society, with Bourdieu attempting to bridge the subject (individual) and object (society) divide through exploring the social construction of objective structures and how they impact upon, and constrain, people's perceptions, actions and constructions. Despite the greater structure in his theorisation, an important aspect is the potential for

individual agency within these structured ways of behaviour and Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital are important. Habitus refers to the socially acquired internalised schemes through which individuals are able to make sense of the world and comprises a set of dispositions which are learnt through socialisation, allowing us to view our world as 'normal', and highlighting how the objective constrains the subjective. Habitus can only operate in relation to a social 'field' – a structured system of social positions, a social arena where people compete and struggle for resources including various forms of capital which can be used as a form of currency. For Bourdieu, the relationship between structure and agency is reciprocal, mutually dependent upon each other rather one or the other dominating. Possessing the right form of capital and habitus in a particular field place constraints upon the individual; certain rules and regulations, structures and power relations exist which determine what is permissible for individuals, and what is prohibited. Within these constraints, the individual possesses a degree of agency to choose how to act within the choices available.

Bourdieu's conceptualisations of habitus and capital formed a significant aspect of my 'syncretic' constructionist approach, and were particularly useful for investigating the resources role social class allowed individuals to draw upon when constructing their aspirations, including both cultural and social capital. Rather than such resources being prescribed to a particular social class which some previous research on educational aspirations and choices found (e.g. Vincent, 2001; Brown and Hesketh, 2004), there was at times a blurring of boundaries with both working-class and middle-class Sikh young

adults employing ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ forms of knowledge (Ball and Vincent, 1998). Such forms of capital could also be drawn upon by these young adults when amongst their peers; certain forms of behaviour, including performances of gender (Connell, 1995; Butler, 1997), could act as forms of cultural capital thereby leading to an increase in symbolic capital and power within their peer group. As such, social and cultural contexts were important, structuring the habitus and allowing different forms of identity to be constructed and helping to explain how the habitus of young adults could differ to those of their parents, and changed over time. Indeed, the individual is crucial for the habitus to function since although it “refers to something historical, it is linked to individual history” (Bourdieu, 1993: 86). In this way, habitus, rather than staying stable, can help to maintain the status quo or be in a process of change, transforming according to context and field, and embedding different layers of socialisation into each other to allow individuals agency.

Such a notion of identity construction complemented the ideas of Stuart Hall and Avtar Brah which I also draw upon. For Hall (1990) constructions of how identity contain a degree of fixity’ (‘being’), located within the history of different ethnic groups, as well as potential for fluidity (‘becoming’), where identities can adapt according to current social and cultural contexts, and alongside and against other members within the ‘diaspora space’ (Brah, 1996). These theorisations of identity were considered useful, adding to Bourdieu’s notions of habitus and capital, and helping to explain and social class, gender and ethnicity intersected and cross-cut each other to produce a

myriad of complex identities in different contexts, which were often ignored in widening participation policies such as AimHigher. Such policies unintentionally constructed some young adults and parents against the middle-class ideal for not possessing the 'right' forms of capital. Constructing identity in this way allowed an investigation of cultural nuances, helping to explain the resources individuals were allowed to draw upon when constructing identities and aspirations, including cultural constructions of gender and the impact of 'izzat', where symbolic power can potentially have 'real effects', particularly when constructed in terms of finding 'respect' (Skeggs, 1997).

2.3 THEORIES OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

2.31 POSITIONING AND 'INTERSECTIONALITY'

The emphasis on positioning and the subject-positions participants adopted were important for the 'syncretic' constructionist approach I develop in this study and can be seen to form the foundation of individuals' identities (Burr, 2003) which were, as explored in the previous chapter, important when exploring the AimHigher policy which constructed and positioned certain forms of identity as against the 'ideal' and unsuitable for Higher Education. Questions concerning the definition of identity are difficult to answer since the concept is problematic. Rather than a single definition being available, "there are a number of different, overlapping, intersecting and sometimes even competing figures" (Grossberg, 1996: 90). Although I consider identity to be socially constructed rather than retaining some essential or primordial quality, the focus of this section of the chapter is not concerned with definitions of identity *per se.* Instead, I am concerned with how identities are produced by individuals and groups, both locally and globally, structured in different social and cultural contexts by their habitus, and how race, ethnicity, social class and gender intersect such processes (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1998).

The notion of positioning allows the researcher to explore how people are located within broader themes and how such positions impact upon localised interactions through which identities emerge, ones that can be adopted or resisted. Thus, identities can be perceived as "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall and du Gay, 1996: 6), as fluid, ever-changing and constantly re-

negotiated through language (Burman and Parker, 1993), and through conflicting and competing themes constructed within distinct socio-historical, political and cultural contexts (Hardy et al, 1999). However, rather than complete agency over the subject-positions one is able to adopt as advocated by Davies and Harré's (1990) notion of 'discursive positioning', I consider individuals' positioning as structured through their habitus and capitals, allowing certain forms of identity to be considered, and others prohibited, evident in this study in both constructions by participants and myself.

As well as considering identity a social construct, it is useful to state how I conceptualise race and ethnicity since they are both intrinsic to the identities that individuals constructed in this thesis. Literature on the subject, along with numerous definitions, is prodigious (e.g. Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Donald and Rattansi, 1992; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990, 1996, 2000; Mama, 1995; Alexander, 1996; Brah, 1996). Drawing upon Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), I find their rejection of reducing categories such as race and ethnicity to simple forms based around biological characteristics useful where they explore of ethnicity and race, alongside that of social class, to highlight the need to analyse specific historical and ideological contexts of each particular formation.

It is here where the notion of 'intersectionality' is useful, focusing on "'difference' in its variable forms, placing emphasis upon emotional and psychic dynamics as much as socio-economic, political and cultural

differences. Difference is thus conceptualised as social relation; experience; subjectivity; and, identity" (Brah and Phoenix, 2004: 83), referring to the connection between social groups and individual identities, incorporating various social differences such as gender, social class, ethnicity and race, and how such categories overlap with one another depending upon social, cultural and historical contexts. Furthermore, there is a greater acknowledgement of the dynamics of power; individuals are not positioned equally, but gender, ethnicity, social class and caste are interrelated and intertwine with each other, resulting in different inequalities and oppressions, and possibly contradictory positions, for example, being a black, middle-class woman, which vary according to particular social and cultural contexts. Consequently, the notion of intersectionality is useful for exploring the fluidity in identity construction and means that:

> "While each of the groups and their designation require a historically specific analysis it is not possible to distinguish in an abstract way between ethnic, racial or national collectivities but rather one can distinguish their different discourses and projects." (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992: 3)

The complexities of the interaction between race, class and gender need to be analysed for each specific circumstance. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) give the example of categories such as Pakistani, Black or Muslim which can be, depending upon the context, constructed alongside national, territorial,

religious or ethnic lines and this was certainly relevant in this thesis. For example, participants constructed themselves as Sikh, middle-class, male etc. which depended not only upon the social and cultural context of the interview, but also where and when I was speaking to them – young adults would construct themselves differently when with their peers as opposed to their parents. As such, identities are produced from different locations, positioned within, and intersecting, social divisions, imbued with different levels of power which serve to create dominance and subordination to other racialised, gendered and classed identities. In this study, the added interesting dimension of caste was also important for identity construction and certain castes, for example Jat (farmer), could have power, both symbolic and 'real', over lesser castes, such as Dalits (untouchables), emphasised by their cultural positioning within the Sikh community. Importantly, however, caste was only important in certain cultural contexts among the Sikh participants in this study, particularly when concerning marriage where endogamous and exogamous practices could lead to an increase or decrease in the 'izzat' a family possessed. Inter-generational differences were also prevalent; young adults were likely to resist the impact of caste and did not see the relevance of it for themselves, emphasising how their habitus was changing from that of their parents. Consequently, the importance of context for constructions was paramount, allowing certain resources and capitals to be available in certain contexts which were not available in others, including those concerning caste and gender.

Notions of intersectionality provide a critique of the use of categories like race and ethnicity, which are treated as fixed human attributes rather than as outcomes of human choice, process and activity where an individual's agency is structured by their habitus, capitals and social and cultural contexts. If such assumptions concerning the construction of identity are to be drawn upon, there is a rejection of explanations of identity which suggest any degree of fixity, including bi-cultural or hyphenated models of identity (e.g. Drury, 1991; Berry, 1992; Dosanjh and Ghuman, 1996; Hutnik, 1991, Modood, 1992, 1998, 2005) which refer to "the ability of a person to function effectively in more than one culture and also to switch roles back and forth as the situation changes." (Jambunathan, Burts & Pierce, 2000: 396). Fixed models essentialise identity, presenting it as a neat and uncomplicated process, without exploring the range of possible forms of identity that may be available to the individual in any given context. Furthermore, the complexities of power are not fully accounted for, particularly in notions of 'hyphenated identities' and a 'hyphenated nationality' (Modood, 1992, 1998, 2005), which attempt to incorporate minority groups so that they simultaneously feel part of their 'own' group as well as part of the national consciousness. For example, 'British-Indian' places the individual within a very rigid, broad category, imbued within a distinct power relationship, which assumes that the person is 'British' first and foremost and 'Indian' second within every context, thereby stressing the importance of a particular geographical location on a person's identity. However, for the participants in this study, identity construction varied according to, and dependent upon, social and cultural contexts. Such contexts were both locally and globally located and, consequently, it is

important to explore how identities were constructed through the diaspora, as explained in the proceeding section, since this had a bearing upon the construction of participants' identities.

2.32 THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'DIASPORIC' IDENTITIES

Recent years have seen a shift from such rigid explanations, to postmodern approaches which attempt to conflate identity with the diaspora (e.g. Hall, 1990; Woodward, 1997; Clifford, 1994; Anthias, 1998; Cohen, 1997; Brah, 1996; Gilroy, 1993; Hall and Du Gay, 1993; Shani, 2002). The importance of diaspora for identity construction cannot be understated, shifting the focus away from the local and national, to the global and historical. Identity construction here is a transnational process as a result of migration and exile, allowing a greater appreciation of how, and why, groups of people can identify and share an affinity with each other, even though this transgresses borders and boundaries, emphasising the range of positions an individual and group can adopt.

Definitions of diaspora have often taken the form of a typology, varying greatly from those that place emphasis upon a 'homeland' (e.g. Safran, 1991; Sheffer, 2003) to those that consider the concept of a 'homeland' to be problematic, instead focusing upon the benefits of the diaspora for its members (e.g. Cohen, 1997). A second, broader way of exploring the notion of diaspora is from a postmodern approach. Such explanations, as Anthias (1998) points out, indicate a 'condition' rather than simply reiterating characteristics that belong to particular types of diaspora. Here, the

fragmentation of metanarratives, as well as the emergence of new 'spaces' and subjectivities, point to notions of diaspora as taking on a new dimension (Brah, 1996). No specific references are made to ethnicity or an original 'homeland', but instead there is an emphasis on 'syncretic' and hybrid identities emerging, drawing upon different traditions, without reference to assimilation or a complete disregard for the past. Such an approach emphasises the fluidity of diasporas as opposed to the more static explanations.

Consequently, I draw on the seminal theoretical concepts of Hall (1990) and Brah (1996), who build upon the ideas of Foucault, to explore the construction of identity. Compared with Foucault who argued that identities were without any 'real' substance, constructed temporarily through discourse and interactions with other people, Brah and Hall both consider identity as having a stable quality, through which groups can identify with each other, combining it with a focus on individual differences. These theorisations of identity place greater emphasis on how it is simultaneously both local and global, located historically, as well as in a constant state of flux. I find Brah and Hall's approach useful since the added focus on diaspora allows a greater emphasis on the transnational construction of identity and how identities can transcend physical national boundaries.

2.33 STUART HALL AND THE NOTIONS OF 'BEING' AND 'BECOMING'

Stuart Hall's influential approach to the construction of identities has had a resounding impact and development upon cultural identity theories in

particular, as well as upon the broader social sciences. He conceptualises diaspora as heterogeneous and diverse, as opposed to containing an essence, where hybridity is important for the construction of identities since they are "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall, 1993: 235)". Hall (1990) theorises two aspects to cultural identity: identity as *being*, and identity as *becoming*. The first explanation of cultural identity – of *being* - contains an essential quality. People with a shared history share certain facets of their identity and therefore, according to Hall, "our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (Hall, 1990: 223). The second view of cultural identity, of 'becoming', whilst acknowledging points of similarity between people, accounts for the many points of difference. Hall argues that we cannot explore the commonalities existing between people without due reference to the differences that exist between them, accounting for the uniqueness of people's experiences. Therefore, cultural identity is "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'; it belongs to the future as well as the past. Rather than considering it as something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture, cultural identities instead come from somewhere, have histories and, therefore, "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1990: 225). However, just as everything else, they undergo transformations – rather than being fixed entities in an essentialised past, "they are subject to

the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall, 1990: 225). It is through using power, that dominant regimes were able to position and represent black people, and their experiences, as the ‘Other’, as well as justifying their dominant regimes’ actions.

I find Hall’s notions of *being* and *becoming* useful, especially for considering how Sikhs had different trajectories in their migration patterns to the UK which were delineated by social class, caste and gender. Although they had points of similarity, the ‘*becomings’* of these Sikhs differed, highlighting how their habitus varied despite sharing similar social and cultural positions. This was also particularly helpful when exploring generational differences between Sikh young adults and their parents, emphasising how young adults and parents were positioned differently from each other.

For Hall, such constructions of identity do not move forward in a straight line from a fixed origin, and importance is placed upon what our identities are framed against. Nevertheless, Hall acknowledges that not all people share the same level of ‘Otherness’; each person has to negotiate economic, political and cultural issues differently and, thus, differences in identity cannot be seen as a simple binary such as past/present or us/them. Instead, individuals are positioned at “differential points along a sliding scale” (Hall, 1990: 227) who are forever developing and changing rather than being assigned to particular categories in a bi- or quadri-polar model. Identity can thus be seen as “temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (Hall and Du Gay, 1993: 6),

constructing us as subjects and allowing us an arena to interact with the world.

The fluidity in representations means that how we are positioned in a particular context is intrinsic to any construction. It is here that Hall introduces his notion of '*enunciation'* to suggest that "though we speak, so to say 'in our own name,' of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless, who speaks and the subject who is spoken of are never exactly in the same place" (Hall, 1992: 220). Such forms of speaking are not always easily achieved; at times our various identities may not be able to co-exist and can cause tension. Therefore, Hall's approach allows a greater acknowledgement of the intersections that can cross-cut the identity construction process as well as introducing notions of difference. His approach can be seen as differing from some social constructionists where relativity is stressed when studying social phenomena, particularly that nothing exists outside of language.

Although Hall and Bourdieu are located within different theoretical standpoints, I argue that their ideas do complement each other, and are both important for this thesis. Notions of 'being' and 'becoming' help to understand how and why young adult's habitus and identities shift and transform, rather than remain static, despite sharing points of reference with their parents. Although there is structure from one's 'being', there is the opportunity for agency through the different 'becomings' an individual's identity takes. Thus, there is the possibility for constructing newer forms of identity, where gender,

social class, and ethnicity can overlap, and, consequently, they allow young adults to gain access to different forms of capital which they can draw upon as a resource to construct their aspirations, permitting some options to be considered, and rejecting others.

2.34 AVTAR BRAH AND THE NOTION OF 'DIASPORA SPACE'

Brah (1996) builds on the ideas of Hall (1990), conceptualising identity within diaspora, and placing emphasis on how power intersects them. Her theorisation of diaspora is more complex than previous explanations, exploring how the same geographical space can contain several different groups' histories, each of which construct and position identities and social relations alongside and against other groups.

The notion of 'diaspora space' is introduced and is inhabited "not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous" (Brah, 1996: 209). Consequently:

> "...multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed; where the permitted and the prohibited perpetually interrogate; and where the accepted and the transgressive imperceptibly mingle even while these syncretic forms may be disclaimed in the name of purity and tradition' (Brah, 1996: 208).

Interacting in the same space does not mean to occupy the same position; different subjects inhabit, in different contexts, varying positions in structures of power which are intersected by social class, race, gender and ethnicity. Diaspora space, then, is more complex compared with other articulations of diaspora, accounting for both migrants and the indigenous population, and how relationships are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated. Such relational positioning allows a deconstruction of power which is inherent within different groups, shaping the location of migrants within their own diaspora space which are imperative to the 'situatedness' of migrant communities (Brah, 1996: 182). Thus, explorations of historical contexts are imperative, and have to be analysed to understand present relationships with dominant group within society.

I want to suggest that such a space can also take into account interactions, and possible conflicts, between members of the 'same' group, highlighting a shift away from the internal homogeneity of migrant groups, to one where there is a greater acknowledgement of the unequal positioning of members with different access to power. Thus, members are not only relationally positioned against the indigenous population, but also against their 'own' group. British-Sikhs are differentiated by social class, caste, religious sect and geographical factors, as well as gender, each of which has the potential to be fraught with tension and instability. Diaspora space, then, becomes a shared and contested place for different dominant and subjugated groups, which create and define themselves in relation to, or conflict with, each other, conveying how they could 'speak' from different habitus despite shared

origins. This was evident in participants' accounts in this study, particularly within the school, a diaspora space where questions of identity and culture can be addressed, which had a significant impact upon the construction of aspirations. Young adults, parents and teachers constructed contrasting and competing identities in this space in relation to educational policies and practices, permitting an exploration of the complexities involved. The enactment of identities are intersected by social class, ethnicity and gender, allowing a multiplicity of subject-positions to be adopted, some subjugated, others hegemonic, including those based around social class where the middle-class are more likely to be constructed in policy as possessing the 'right' form of cultural capital for the school field, and the working-class as 'other', positioned against policy. The construction of identities within this space was then fraught with tension, constantly negotiated and renegotiated and constructed alongside and against others, allowing an exploration of the heterogeneity of groups – not all parents had the same resources they were able to draw upon when constructing aspirations for their children.

As such, I find Anthias' (2001) theorisations of these categories useful for exploring how these forms of identity intersect and interweave each other. Class, for her, concerns "the organisation and production of economic resources"; gender refers to "the production and reproduction of sexual difference and biological reproduction"; and ethnicity is "the production and reproduction of collective and solitary bonds relating to origin or cultural difference" (Anthias, 2001: 844). Such categories are not fixed, but dependent upon, and varying according to, social and historical contexts.

Furthermore, these categories are “cultural constructions with experiential, intersubjective, organisational and representational facets…each one of which provides the field and habitus for the others” (Anthias, 2001: 844).

Each social position contains different levels of access to different resources which can include “the allocation of specific social roles such as occupational (caste and class) or familial (gender) but more often than not these are accompanied by a pecking order of roles and places” (Anthias: 2001: 845). Moreover, “*unequal resource allocation* takes place, at times legitimised by socially constructed notions of value” (Anthias, 2001: 845), a form of symbolic power, as well as economic resources, which will have an impact upon how individuals’ habitus will transform, impacting upon their ‘becomings’ and their positioning within the diaspora space.

Hall (1990) and Brah (1996) theorise identity as in a constant state of negotiation and interpretation, contested and ever-changing, specific to social, cultural and historical contexts, and intersected by social class, gender, ethnicity and caste. Their ideas have been influential on educational and identity theorists, including studies on South Asians and Muslims (e.g. Rattansi, 2000; Shain, 2003; Gale, 2009; Karner, 2007; Fletcher, 2011). Such studies then were positioned against earlier cultural identity theories (e.g. Hutnik, 1991) which conceptualised identities as fixed, with little reference to the importance of social and cultural contexts, and different cultural identities were then considered as incompatible, leading to a ‘cultural clash’.

These theorisations of cultural identity are important for this study, accounting for how British-Sikhs have varying experiences; their migration histories, the regions they have settled, their caste, social class and gender have all served to construct distinct identities for them and shape their habitus. Each of these structural factors, located within culture and history, has an impact upon power relations and is constructed alongside, and against, other Sikhs as well as the indigenous and other ethnic populations. Such positions vary according to context, where some identities come to the fore, and others are marginalised and this was present in the constructions by participants and myself in this study. Positions were ever-changing throughout each interview, highlighting how identities were multi-layered and overlapped, therefore having a higher degree of complexity than widening participation policies stressed.

Furthermore, the social, cultural and historical contexts were crucial for understanding how different identities could intersect, allowing certain resources to be drawn upon, and allowing the construction of new and unique forms of identity, emphasising how although their 'beings' could be similar and 'becomings' could vary. These constructions of identity allowed an exploration of how, and why, participants were able to draw upon different capitals in different contexts, despite sharing similar social and cultural positions. However, these resources could result in some young adults as being positioned against the AimHigher programme by teachers, particularly if they constructed identities which were considered as not possessing the

‘right’ form of capital for Further and Higher Education, including those based around ‘hegemonic’ masculinity.

Facets of participants’ identities were not all simultaneously prominent; certain aspects of their identities, such as their gender, came to the fore in certain situations, and were of less importance in others. Taking this theorisation of how identities are constructed and positioned against each other helps to show how the construction of identities were not distinct from the construction of aspirations – the forms of identity that were possible to construct had an impact upon the resources that were available when constructing future decisions. This complexity in identity construction was not fully explored in widening participation policy, which constructed identities with a greater static quality.

2.4 REFLEXIVITY AND POWER IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The assumptions I brought to the research, concerning my 'own' Sikh group and my former school, had a significant impact upon the interpretations I formed of phenomena, including constructions of participants. These had to be acknowledged and I drew upon the notion of reflexivity to allow a greater exploration of these assumptions, particularly issues of power and positioning, bringing greater transparency to the research process and more realism than some social constructionist approaches would advocate.

A focus on subject-positions does not only have consequences for the positions constructed for the researched, there are also implications and greater opportunities to explore the subject-positions taken by, and constructed for, the researcher. Through this, reflexivity is emphasised, recognising that the "knower is part of the matrix of what is known" (Wilkinson, 1986: 13). Dynamics of power are also relevant here as Bhavnani points out:

> "This power of the researcher is, however, not always noted or analysed - precisely because the power is transparent. Because of this transparency, the *processes* by which research material is omitted from either the analysis or the write-up come to be understood as natural or obvious." (Bhavnani, 1990: 141-142)

There are two aspects of power for Bhavnani (1990) in the relationship between researcher and researched. The first, exploring the power vested with the researcher, shows how the researcher has greater power as they decide upon the research, the methods and the analysis. The second, what she refers to as 'socially ascribed characteristics' (Bhavnani, 1990: 142), includes the race and gender of both participants and researcher, and how the interplay of these characteristics can have a role to play in utterances as well as subject-positions constructed. Both these aspects of power, particularly the second, link in with other parts of my 'syncretic' approach. Bourdieu's (1985, 1989, 1992) notions of habitus, field and capital and Hall (1990) and Brah's (1996) subject-positioning and constructions of identity were certainly important, as were 'performances' of gender (Connell, 1995; Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2004). The habitus of participants and researcher, along with the subject-positions and identities they constructed, had an impact upon how power was deployed and shifted during the entire research process, from deciding upon initial research questions, to recruiting participants and conducting interviews. Such notions of reflexivity are explored further in the methodology chapter and how I drew upon them within this study.

2.5 SUMMARY OF MY THEORETICAL POSITION

In this section, I briefly summarise my 'syncretic' constructionist approach which combines a range of different theoretical positions. Bourdieu's notions of habitus, capitals and field are foregrounded since they allow an in-depth exploration of both the impact of social class, gender and ethnicity, along with nuances of culture, and the various resources these allow individuals to draw upon when constructing aspirations and forms of identity. I consider Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital to be especially relevant for explaining how 'izzat' or family honour can have an impact upon aspirations and identities, and links to the search for 'respect' (Skeggs, 1997, 2004) within the local community. Certain forms of identity and aspiration, particularly those concerning gender, could increase the symbolic capital parents and young adults had, thereby increasing their social status amongst peers and within the local community. Compared with Foucault, there is a greater focus on social class in Bourdieu's perspective, crucial for this thesis since class had an important impact upon which resources were available to parents and young adults when constructing aspirations and identities. This was important when investigating the AimHigher programme, where an unofficial consequence was positioning some working-class individuals as against policy for not possessing the 'right' cultural capital for academic success.

Other theorists who focused on the construction of identities were also drawn upon as part of my approach, including Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), to highlight how these categories are social constructs, specific to historical, social and cultural contexts which, rather than being static, are fluid,

overlapping and cross-cutting each other. As such, I find the concept of 'intersectionality' useful (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Anthias, 2001) to explore these complex constructions which position individuals differently in hierarchies of power which was important, for example, when exploring how young adult's 'performed' various forms of gender (Connell, 1995; Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2004), which could allow them to acquire cultural and symbolic capital; a form of power amongst their peers.

I find Hall (1990) and Brah (1996) useful to explore how such identities retain a degree of fixity, located historically and culturally to enable members of groups to identify with each other globally. However, identities also contain the potential for change, adapting to current contexts and alongside, and against, other members of the 'diaspora space'. Hall and Brah's ideas are considered to complement Bourdieu and useful for explaining how the habitus of young adults is fluid and shifting from those of their parents, allowing a new range of possibilities, with both their identities and aspirations, to be considered. Furthermore, although I do not draw explicitly on discursive psychological approaches, I consider some rhetorical tools useful for shedding light on how identities were constructed by individuals in different contexts and, in particular, issues of 'stake' and presenting 'face' and 'politeness' came to the fore in participants' accounts.

Since I brought certain assumptions about my 'own' Sikh group and my former school to the research, there was greater realism in this study which had to be acknowledged. As such, I included reflexivity in this study in order

to explore how and why I formed certain interpretations over others, bringing greater transparency to the research process.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter began with an investigation of quantitative approaches to educational research. 'Personality-matching' and developmental models were critiqued for being deterministic and failing to account for context, and more recent quantitative studies, despite improving upon earlier models since they investigated social class, ethnicity and gender, were rejected since they could not explore the intersections of these identities nor the impact of cultural factors. Such issues were crucial in this study for understanding which resources participants' drew upon to construct aspirations and identities. Consequently, I argued there was a need for qualitative research on the topic.

Some qualitative, social constructionist approaches, which have been drawn upon in educational research, were then explored. The first, a 'bottom-up' discursive psychological approach, focuses upon the performative actions of language. The second approach, 'top-down' and based on the ideas of Foucault, concerns the interplay of discourse, power and subject-positions. Although I partly draw upon both approaches, I find Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field and capital more useful, helping to explore different forms of identity, particularly social class which is lacking in Foucault's theory, along with cultural nuances and the impact they have upon the construction of aspirations and identities.

Next, the chapter centred on identity construction and, in particular, how subject-positions are intersected by social class, gender, caste and ethnicity, each of which is infused with power. These constructions of identity are important for future aspirations; certain identities have been unofficially constructed against the 'ideal' in the AimHigher programme for not possessing the requisite habitus and capitals for academic success. The significant of historical and cultural contexts were stressed through the ideas of Hall and Brah, and linked to Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus', conveying how the habitus of young adults was not static, but was fluid, varying from those of their parents and their peers, allowing certain aspirations and identities to be considered, and rejecting others.

Finally, I explored notions of reflexivity and power, particularly important since I brought assumptions about my 'own' Sikh group and my former secondary school to the research, which had a bearing upon how I interpreted data and constructed identities for participants, before summarising my 'syncretic' social constructionist theoretical position.

The next chapter is the methodology which explores the practical aspects of the research design, from justifying the methods employed to the transcription and analysis of the data. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The first two chapters introduced the theoretical background and subject matter of the study, reviewing previous literature on aspirations and developing my theoretical approach. Such literature informed the principal research question and several sub-questions and research aims:

RQ: What are the educational and occupational aspirations of a small sample of Sikh young adults?

Research aims are to:

6) Explore how educational and occupational aspirations are interrelated.
7) Explore which resources Sikh parents, young adults, and their teachers draw upon when constructing such aspirations and why certain resources are used over others?
8) Explore how aspirations are constructed within each cluster of parent, teacher and young adult?
9) Shed some light upon how some British-Sikh identities are constructed.
10) Examine the stereotypical view of 'Asian' parents as having unrealistically high aspirations for their children.

In order to explore this research question and these aims, I designed the research according to the broad social constructionist approach I developed in Chapter Two which also follows the shift within social and educational research in recent years, from a positivist/ empiricist approach, to social

constructionism and postmodernism. This has resulted in a particular ontological and epistemological stance being taken, where there is a rejection of a singular 'truth', as well as adopting a particular theoretical position emphasising the importance of context and specificity in any interpretation of an action or event (Usher, 1996).

Taking this on board, this chapter aims then to explain how this study was conducted. Firstly, the research design is explored, and here I briefly examine the methodological assumptions on which it is based, followed by the qualitative, semi-structured interviews I employed, as well as the research criteria, sample, and settings. Notions of reflexivity are explored in the following section, examining the researcher's own role within the research, and how I drew upon it in this study, especially important considering the assumptions I brought to the study. The subsequent section investigates ethical considerations I had to be aware of since some young adults were under 16. Finally, I explore the transcription and analysis of the data before reflecting upon the research study.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.11 METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Before exploring the research design of this thesis, it is useful to briefly return to the theoretical standpoint of this thesis and how it is, in part, positioned against previous approaches. The assumptions of the methodology invariably have an impact upon every aspect of the research process, from the method employed to the analysis of data.

Every theoretical position has an *ontology* (which contain assumptions about the nature of the world) and an *epistemology* (our knowledge about this world). As explored in the first literature review chapter on theoretical positions, a positivist/ empiricist epistemology, drawing upon ontological notions of the world based upon the natural sciences, considers social phenomena to be “orderly, lawful and hence predictable” (Usher, 1996: 14). Thus, inherent within this are assumptions based around an objective understanding of the natural world; an acceptance of knowledge gained from rigorous measurement and testing, and investigative enquiries concerned with discovering the truth about world. Assumptions from this standpoint emphasise rationality, impartiality and predictions, and are not reflexive since they focus on the method rather than processes of inquiry (Usher, 1996: 13).

This study instead is conducted from a broad social constructionist standpoint. Such an approach stresses the importance of locating practices within socio-historical and cultural contexts when constructing meaning, and the need for specificity in any interpretations.

3.12 ETHNOGRAPHY

Although this study did take a 'syncretic' constructionist approach, predominantly rely upon theorists such as Bourdieu and Hall for analysis, there is an ethnographical element to the study since I was researching my 'own' Sikh group at my former school. The interviews I conducted with the students and the teaching staff occurred within a particular ethnographic location with its own particular culture which, although not the prime focus of this study, had a significant impact upon constructions formed. In addition, there were aspects of ethnography when exploring the habitus of individuals through investigating culture, both at school and their homes.

As the research progressed, it became apparent that aspects of my identity were having a profound and explicit impact upon how I interpreted the behaviour and 'talk' of both participants and potential participants and, therefore it is important to account for. Addressing these assumptions helped to explain how and why certain subject-positions were adopted over others in different social and cultural contexts, and the particular forms of social, cultural and symbolic capital that participants had access to.

Employing ethnographies as methods and methodologies is becoming more popular within the social sciences (Stephenson, 2005) and these have been loosely defined as the researcher immersing themselves in participants' lives, recording phenomena through interviews, to gain a better understanding of them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and this study drew upon many of these features. Participants were studied 'in the field' and therefore were

interviewed either at school or in their homes (the setting is explored in more detail later in the chapter). Although the primary source of data were interviews, assumptions were also made from being present at school events including 'Parents' Evening', which impacted upon how young adults' actions were interpreted, how identities were constructed for them, and subsequently, how data was analysed. As such, the study was in-depth, qualitative, and constructions were located within particular socio-cultural contexts.

Drawing upon these assumptions resulted in a shift in epistemology. Compared with some discursive psychological approaches that theorise language as an all-important resource yet fail to account for an external reality (e.g. Potter, 1996; Gergen, 1999), and others which argue for epistemological relativism where there is no grounding of theory (e.g. Edwards, et al, 1995), my approach stresses the importance of contextualising knowledge. As such, there is a greater shift towards realism in this study than advocated in some other social constructionist approaches with an exploration of how socially constructed meanings can still have tangible effects, for example, in reproducing inequalities.

Since I was a former pupil at the school and had been taught by some of the teachers I interviewed, I approached the research with certain assumptions, which, rather than attempting to ignore, I acknowledged since they would allow a greater understanding of how and why I interpreted and analysed data in a particular way. This was especially important since Sikhs were

studied – my 'own' group and I had certain socio-cultural and religious assumptions which had to be accounted for.

Although this study was not a 'traditional' ethnography, and instead there was a greater reliance upon Bourdieu's habitus and capitals, and Hall's notion of positioning, exploring the particular assumptions I brought to the research allowed me to examine my own role within the research and allowing an exploration of why and how I formed certain interpretations over others. Through reflexivity, there was a greater understanding of how and why I adopted various subject-positions, and why participants constructed identities alongside, and against, myself which were intersected by gender, ethnicity, social class and caste. Rather than being seen as a negative, this permitted greater transparency in the research process of this study. Such subject-positions were not only constructed during the interviews, but also when trying to recruit participants for the study. Here, I kept a research diary which was used to note down personal thoughts and feelings concerning potential participants' actions, talk and other events which demonstrated how I was constructing myself, as well as others, throughout the study. These notes were employed as data and I explore some of these constructions later in this chapter, in the section on reflexivity, and in the subsequent chapter on the construction of subject-positions.

3.13 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Taking the methodological assumptions of this study into consideration, I realised that the method employed had to mirror the paradigm within which I

was operating, since method and theory cannot be separated from each other (Kvale, 1996; Silverman, 1993; Gee, 1999), and subscribing to a particular methodology would also entail a particular way of understanding (Scott, 1996). Thus, the method had to account for the aims and rationale of the research as well as fitting in with the assumptions of the methodology, including the ontology and epistemology.

After much consideration, interviews were decided upon as the best method for collecting data which would allow an exploration and understanding of the research questions from the theoretical approach I developed. Interviews are constructed in a novel manner providing a range of advantages over other methods, allowing a standard variety of themes to be explored with different participants whilst facilitating the probing of issues that emerge (Potter, 1996b). From employing this method, I had an active role in the co-construction of knowledge, which was especially important bearing in mind the assumptions I brought to this research, rather than seeing the interview as a "speaking questionnaire" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 165). In addition, using interviews allowed me to explore dynamics of power and how they fluctuated between myself and participants as subject-positions were constructed and re-constructed.

I found Kvale's (1996) exploration of qualitative interviews as a "construction site of knowledge" (Kvale, 1996: 42) useful, where there is greater importance placed upon the co-construction of knowledge, context and a multiplicity of possible truths. Adopting his ideas meant that it was not myself,

the researcher, who, through asking and probing, uncovered meaning. Instead, meaning was constructed through the conversations between the interviewer and interviewee, which were infused by shifting relations of power through the different positions they constructed, to jointly produce knowledge. Knowledge, thus, is constructed as 'interrelational' for Kvale, and useful for exploring the subject-positions that researcher and researched adopted during the research process and the resources they employed to do so. Importantly, such knowledge is context specific and "knowledge obtained within one context is not automatically transferable to, nor commensurable with, the knowledge within other contexts" (Kvale, 1996: 44). As such, there was careful consideration when deciding the settings of interviews with parents, teachers and young adults which could have a bearing upon the data acquired and I explore this later in the chapter.

The key questions for planning an interview-based investigation, for Kvale, are concerned with the '*what'* and the '*why'*, before the '*how'* can be addressed. The *what* concerns obtaining a "preknowledge" of the subject that is to be investigated, which I gained through reading literature on the subject and identifying areas where there was a distinct lack of research. The *why* is a rationale, outlining the purpose of the study and is firmly located within particular ontological and epistemological frameworks. Finally, the *how* relates to the different techniques of interviewing, and analysing and using these effectively in order to acquire the proposed knowledge. Once again, this cannot be separated from the ontology and epistemology and due

consideration was given when choosing the exact method and semi-structured interviews.

3.14 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

I decided on semi-structured interviews and the *why*, relating to the rationale**,** then involves positioning them within the epistemology and ontology. There is the argument that social constructionist approaches should employ unstructured interviews to emphasise the conversational nature of the interaction between researcher and researched, equalising their relationship. However, I consider this undesirable and improbable since power infused the relationship between participants and myself. Instead, I draw upon Potter & Wetherell (1987) who argue that "the researcher's questions become just as much a topic of analysis as the interviewee's answers. These questions set some of the functional context for the answers and they must be included" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 165). Taking this into consideration, I attempted to include my questions in every extract I employed in order to demonstrate the 'functional', as well as socio-cultural, context of every account. Furthermore, many of my responses to participants were added, including markers such as 'mm' and 'yeah' indicating agreement. Including such linguistic resources helped to shed light, at times, on how I was responding to participants and constructing a position for myself alongside, and against them.

Taking a similar approach to Potter and Wetherell and Kvale, Holstein and Gubrium (1995) claim that meaning is not solely drawn out in interviews

during the questioning process, but both parties are active in their co-constructions of meaning. Their ‘active interviewing’ approach advocates interview schedules as guides, rather than scripts, which can accommodate contextual shifts and provide opportunities for reflection. Drawing upon Holstein and Gubrium, I had three interview schedules (one each for parents, teachers and young adults) which covered themes I sought to explore, rather than formal and rigid schedules, allowing subtle changes to account for the idiosyncrasies of the particular interview.

However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, c.f. Silverman, 2001) have pointed out, it is naïve to assume that an unstructured interview is not a form of social control, allowing people to say whatever they may. A minimal approach from the researcher could result in interpretive problems from the participants concerning what is relevant. An unstructured interview, although allowing greater scope to investigate responses that emerged during the interview, were discarded since potentially the interview could have transgressed into areas extraneous to the study which would have resulted in the aims and research questions not being fully explored. Furthermore, a structured interview was rejected because the rigidity of this method would have placed certain constraints upon the ‘talk’ of participants, possibly limiting their responses, and not always allowing them the option to expand upon their replies into areas that they considered to be important around the topic.

Instead, as Smith (1996) has argued, semi-structured interviews retain greater flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe and pursue interesting avenues that emerge during the interview, where the lack of structure allows participants greater control thereby making the research process more equal (Reissman, 1993). Employing a semi-structured interview requires a focus upon themes, rather than on specific, standardised questions (Kvale, 1996; Smith, 1996), permitting greater scope for the researcher to probe respondents' answers in more depth. Such interviews are therefore guides, allowing shifts in conversations, seeing it as a mutual collaboration between researcher and researched in the construction of knowledge during the duration of the interview.

Interview schedules should be worked out in advance of the interviews, and should be focused on themes rather than specific standardised questions (Kvale, 1996). The themes identified related to the aims and research questions of the study – with a focus on investigating the interrelationship between parents, teachers and young adults in the constructions that they drew upon. So, for young adults, for example, three general themes were outlined relating to their parents, their teachers and the careers service, with several points under each heading. Interview schedules for parents and teachers also followed similar guidelines[6].

Kvale (1996) proposes nine types of questions that can be useful for semi-structured interviews which I found useful. Firstly, '*introducing questions'* can

[6] The interview schedules for parents, teachers and young adults can be viewed in the Appendix

aid the researcher in setting the context of the interview for respondents. Next, '*follow-up questions'* are asked for participants to extend their answers, thereby providing more detail. Direct questioning here is not required, "a mere nod, or 'mm', or just a pause can indicate the subject to go on with the description" (Kvale, 1996: 133). Furthermore, respondents' answers can be probed more fully through the use of '*direct'* and '*indirect'* questions, or '*silence'*, which can be '*probing'*, in order to pursue answers, and '*specifying'*, which although more operationalised, is employed to query specific themes. In addition, the researcher, through '*structuring questions'*, has control over when the exploration of a theme has been exhausted and can move the interview onto another theme. Finally, the researcher can employ '*interpreting questions'* to gain a better understanding of respondents' answers.

In line with Kvale's suggestions, this study relied on an 'introducing question' to open up each interview. With the young adults, this consisted of 'What subjects are you currently studying?', allowing the context of the interview to be set. Several bullet points, acting as suggestions, were included under each theme, serving to remind myself of which areas had to be covered before continuing on to the next theme. For example, 'positives and negatives of career', and 'any alternative(s)?', when young adults talked about their career choices. Both direct and indirect questions were used at points and the conversation was furthered, and respondents' answers probed, through the use of 'mm' as well as asking more direct and specific questions. Lengths of interviews varied according to participants but usually lasted 45 minutes which enabled me to cover areas of interest. However,

they were not so long as to be time-consuming for participants or so that they would get uninterested.

I also draw upon Rubin and Rubin (1995) who argue that interviewer neutrality is impossible, as well as undesirable, from a constructionist position. For them, the researcher is an active part of constructing reality and therefore cannot ask for openness from participants without being open and sincere themselves. Additionally, since the qualitative interview requires interpretation of accounts by the researcher, it is impossible for interviewer to be value-free and, through using reflexivity, these values can be acknowledged. Certainly, with the assumptions that I brought to the research, it would have been impossible to remain neutral and no attempt was made to do so. Instead, I draw upon Gadamer's (1994) conceptualisation of 'prejudice' where our expectations are grounded in our historical and cultural expectations which frame how we interpret and understand phenomena. As such, I attempted to acknowledge such assumptions when analysing data and writing up results, using and grounding them for cultural insights and interpretations.

3.15 RESEARCH FIELD

Since the focus of the study was on the educational and occupational aspirations of young adult Sikhs, I had to decide upon an appropriate research field, sample and setting which would best allow an exploration of this. After careful consideration with my supervisors, Year 11 pupils, aged 15 to 16, were decided upon since they would be giving their future options

more thought as they were coming to the end of their compulsory education and would be making choices, both academic and non-academic, which would define their subsequent years.

The sample would consist of young Sikhs, a group that makes up only 0.6%[7] of the British population and, therefore, to facilitate the acquiring of the sample, a school with a large Sikh population was chosen. My former secondary school in West London, where approximately one-third of the pupils in Year 11 had identified themselves as Sikh, was chosen. Another ethnographic element would then be prevalent in this study - I was not only investigating my 'own' group, I would be conducting the research in a familiar setting. However, my role had shifted from a former student to now as 'expert' in the field; a position where I was seeking to create and explore knowledge. Invariably, this had a bearing upon identities and how power would function, allowing different subject-positions to be adopted, and preventing others.

3.16 Research Sample, Criteria and Gaining Access to Participants

The research aims had an impact upon the sample size and a sample was required which would allow an investigation of how aspirations were constructed within the interrelationship in each cluster of parents, child and teachers. Time constraints were also a factor; the study was self-funded, meaning that I would be transcribing the data.

[7] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=954

As explored earlier, widening participation policies, including AimHigher and Connexions, have largely drawn upon larger sample sizes to explore the impact of social factors, failing to explore nuances of culture and forms of identity which can have an impact upon the resources individuals are able to draw upon, and how they are positioned in policies. To address these issues, a smaller sample size, adhering to the principles of a social constructionist approach, was decided upon for this study, allowing an exploration of these issues, including, importantly, the intersections of various forms of social categories such as social class, caste, ethnicity and gender, and the role which cultural issues had to play. The 'richer' data produced would be harder to procure with a larger sample.

Ten young adults (eight boys and two girls) were chosen to participate along with their parents, their form tutor(s), their two Heads of Year, and their careers teacher at school. Both parents were included to explore their role and to investigate if their migratory patterns had an impact upon their constructions of aspirations and forms of identity.

The school chosen for the study was a large secondary school in a west London suburb, chosen primarily for the large Sikh population within the school. Furthermore, the school was chosen since I had previously attended there as a student and still had contact with a number of teachers, which made access to pupils via school records and during lesson time easier. Although being a relative 'insider' (Ahmed, 1996) within the school was not

important, in terms of the quality of data being produced, it did allow easier access to pupils, via school records, and during lesson time, where I was able to speak to them about the research.

The social class of young adults was defined by government NS-SEC classification[8] methods (seen in Table A and B), where those L1-L6 operational categories were defined as 'middle-class', and those from L7-L14 as 'working-class', and were based upon their parents' occupations (whoever was classified higher). Eight categories have been identified with several subgroups under each. As such, out of the 10 students in the sample, seven were working-class (six boys and one girl) and three were middle-class (two boys and one girl). Although using this model to classify students is problematic since class, just as other social factors, cannot be neatly classified into a range of categories, it was imperative to do so. This study, in part, focused on occupational aspirations and it was crucial to explore if, and how, parents' occupations could have an impact upon their expectations and aspirations for their children. Furthermore, this was linked to the resources they were able to draw upon when helping their child construct future aspirations – as some previous research has indicated, middle-class and working-class parents have access to different forms of resources which they are able to utilise (e.g. Ball and Vincent, 1998), including different forms of capital. Consequently, the social class and occupations of parents could play a significant role in the future aspirations of their children.

[8] http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/classifications/current/ns-sec/cats-and-classes/analytic-classes/index.html

Table A: NS-SEC Categories

NS-SEC Categories	
Analytic Class	**Operational Categories**
1.1	L1 Employers in Large Organisations
	L2 Higher Managerial Occupations
1.2	L3 Higher Professional Occupations
2	L4 Lower Professional and Higher Technical Occupations
	L5 Lower Managerial Occupations
	L6 Higher Supervisory Occupations
3	L7 Intermediate Occupations
4	L8 Employers in Small Organisations
	L9 Own Account Workers
5	L10 Lower Supervisory Occupations
	L11 Lower Technical Occupations
6	L12 Semi-Routine Occupations
7	L13 Routine Occupations
8	L14 Never Worked and Long-term unemployed
	L15 Full-time Students
	L16 Occupations Not Stated or Adequately Described
	L17 Not Classifiable for Other Reasons x

TABLE B: INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUNG ADULTS

Student[9]	Gender	Social Class	Caste	Mother's Area of Origin	Fathers Area of Origin
Kiran	F	M/C	Ramgharia	East Africa	East Africa
Simran	F	W/C	Dalit	India	India
Ravinder	M	M/C	Ramgharia	East Africa	East Africa
Jaswinder	M	W/C	Jatt	India	India
Harjinder	M	W/C	Jatt	India	India
Amarpreet	M	M/C	Jatt	India	India
Jagjit	M	W/C	Jatt	East Africa	India
Permjeet	M	W/C	Ramgharia	India	India
Ajeet	M	W/C	Jatt	East Africa	India
Manjinder	M	W/C	Jatt	India	India
Myself	M	M/C	Jatt	East Africa	India

Table C: Socio-Economic Status of Young Adults

Student	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	NS-SEC Operational Category	Social Class
Amarpreet	Restaurant Owner	Housewife	L3	m/c
Ravinder	Manager	P/T Secretary	L2	m/c
Kiran	Company Owner	Housewife	L3	m/c
Simran	Cab Driver	Cleaner	L12	w/c
Jaswinder	Shop Keeper	Shop Keeper	L8	w/c
Harjinder	Baggage Handler	Cleaner	L13	w/c
Jagjit	Printing Business	Airport Worker	L8	w/c
Permjeet	Shop Keeper	Shop Keeper	L8	w/c
Ajeet	Unemployed[10]	Secretary	L13	w/c

[9] Sikh names are unisex, and are equally used for either gender. Names were thus chosen at random

Manjinder	Unemployed	Airport Worker	L13	w/c

Six sets of parents in the sample were from India (which can be seen in the table above, including myself) and two sets of parents from East Africa. Significantly, both parents had not always migrated from the same country and with the remaining two sets of parents, both working-class, the mother was from East Africa and the father from India. Migratory patterns could have an impact upon the familial habitus; parents from India and East Africa could be from different social classes and castes and, thus, they could have an impact upon the capitals that they were able to draw upon to help their children construct aspirations. In addition, form tutors were identified as those teachers that pupils would come into contact with most often, both in PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education) and registration, and were chosen to be interviewed along with their Heads of Year and the resident careers service teacher. In total, 41 interviews[11] were conducted, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, although this varied according to each participant, which allowed adequate time to explore the research aims and questions.

There were several criteria for young adults to take part in this study. Firstly, students had to be in Year 11 and aged 15-16. Participants had to be 'Sikh', which was defined as broadly as possible, not relying upon the five *K's*[12] - the

[10] These husbands were both actively looking for work

[11] An example of an interview with a young adult is in the Appendix as well as the different interview schedules I used.

[12] *Kesh* is hair. Sikhs promise not to cut their hair but let it grow as a symbol of their faith and usually, within a turban. The *Kanga* is a small comb used to keep their long hair tidy. The *Kara* is a

physical symbols used to identify Sikhs, including growing long hair and wearing a turban. Such a definition allowed Sikhs such as myself to be incorporated, those that cut their hair (*sehajdhari* Sikhs). Taking such criteria into consideration, young adults were identified as Sikh based upon their school records, where parents had to define their children's ethnicity when they began secondary school[13], giving greater parity to the researcher/ participant relationship, and facilitating the recruitment of the sample.

However, there were problems with defining the criteria in this way when trying to recruit participants - one girl, who from her school records was a 'Hindu', went to the *Gurdwara* (Sikh temple) every week, more often than myself, and therefore constructed herself as 'Sikh'. Competing notions of what it meant to be 'Sikh' were apparent. Although I had tried to have as broad a definition of Sikhism as possible, it was still narrow and constructed a static identity, whereas she constructed her identity as fluid and varying according to social, cultural and religious settings. Notions of power were certainly evident here since ultimately it was my decision who participated in the study; my definition of 'Sikh' was all important and the girl was refused based upon her school records. However, she had placed me in a quandary; my definition of Sikhism, based upon school records, was lacking, raising the question of *who* and *what* a 'Sikh' is in contemporary Britain, a recurring theme in the interviews of the young adults in this study.

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steel bangle worn on the right arm. The *Kaccha* is similar to a soldier's undershorts. The *Kirpan* is a small sword.

[13] http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/collecting/763919/763927/

Young adults who fitted the criteria were approached, the aims of the study explained, and asked to participate. Letters were sent home to those students who were interested and wished to take part, outlining details of the study, and asking for parents' informed written consent via a 'tear-off slip' allowing their child to participate. This initial approach was not as successful as it could have been; parents often refused to read letters (according to their children), or sign the return slip and the sample of ten was not initially acquired.

As MacDougall and Fudge (2001) point out from their investigation into accessing participants for in-depth interviews, some people "do not readily approach the researcher in response to advertising, however well targeted that may be, and therefore the researcher must seek alternative pathways to them" (MacDougall and Fudge, 2001: 119). The alternative strategies I employed were direct, face-to-face negotiation with parents which took place during formal school events such as Parents' Evening and the 'Sixth Form Open Evening'. This proved to be more successful as I was able to speak directly to parents and answer any queries. Although the sample was now acquired, there were eight boys and only two girls, whereas I had hoped to have an equal number of boys and girls. This was not ideal but not uncommon in educational research - Hicks' (2002) research on working-class primary school children, exploring how issues of class and gender impact upon their education, relied on a sample of two, one boy and girl.

Parents at the Open Evening were once again given information about the study and informed consent was sought. Contact details of participants were taken and flexible dates, fitting around their schedules, were arranged. There were no problems recruiting teachers, who were all happy to participate, with interviews being conducted around their school schedules. Pupils were also interviewed during school hours during 'non-essential' subjects (English, Maths and Science) as agreed with the Heads of Year. Various subject-positions were constructed during this recruitment process, both by potential participants, as well as by myself, which were noted in my research diary and I explore this in far greater detail in the subsequent chapter on the construction of subject-positions.

TABLE D: INFORMATION CONCERNING TEACHERS

Teacher	**Position**	**Time at school**	**Social Class**	**Ethnic Background**	**Pupils in Form**
Mr Peters	Head of Year	4 Years	m/c	White	
Mrs Richards	Head of Year	20 Years	m/c	White	
Mrs Jones	Form Tutor & Careers Teacher	25 Years	m/c	White	Kiran Amarpreet
Mr Weaver	Form Tutor	22 Years	m/c	White	Ajeet Manjinder
Mr Pleat	Form Tutor	3 Months	m/c	White	Jagjit
Mrs Cole	Form Tutor	4 Months	m/c	White	Permjeet Simran
Miss Singh	Form Tutor	2 Months	m/c	Indian	Ravinder Jaswinder Harjinder

Pseudonyms were employed for the teachers who were all 'white' apart from Miss Singh, a Sikh female. Many teachers had not been at the school for long, similar to teacher retention rates across the country during the period this study was conducted[14]. Such information was important, highlighting why some teachers did not have much knowledge of their students' future aspirations and how there were considerable social and cultural differences between some teachers and some young adults and their parents. Consequently, this allowed an investigation of why some parents, not only those from working-class backgrounds, could feel that the school was not a 'place' for them.

However, Miss Singh, as compared with the other teachers, was Sikh, and through her dual 'insider' role, as both teacher and Sikh, was able to demonstrate an understanding of cultural issues which these young adults experienced, including those concerning their gender identities, their peer groups, and their family relationships, all of which could have an impact upon their future options, something which AimHigher failed to account for.

3.17 INTERVIEW SETTINGS

The advantages and disadvantages of each setting were carefully considered since it can result in new research problems as well as new discoveries (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). There is the potential for a range of identities to be constructed in each setting, each of which position the

[14] (e.g.https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR553.pdf)

researcher and participant “in more powerful and less powerful relations with the social actors” (Scott, 2000: 134) as the research does not always have specialist knowledge (Oliver, 1992). Therefore, as Scott (2000) claims, exploring constructs of power within explanations of social phenomena are obligatory since research is conducted in settings in which participants involved will have different access to resources.

Taking this into consideration, and realising that data acquired was contextually dependent, I interviewed participants in settings in which I assumed that they would be most comfortable, as well as having the interview topic in the forefront of their minds: the teachers and pupils at the school, and parents at home. Such settings were also chosen, in part, because of convenience - it was easier for both parents and teachers if I interviewed them in their homes and at school respectively. Interviews were conducted with parents in a quiet room in their home which made it easier for them to schedule the interview around their work and family. Teachers were interviewed at school in a quiet room, again based around their timetables. The young adults could have been interviewed in either the school or their homes, but, as Hutchings (1997) argues, children are accustomed to being asked questions in a school setting and therefore they were interviewed in the Head of Year’s office. I explore how issues of power were inscribed in the interview process in the next chapter, which also explores the impact the interview setting had upon constructions of subject-positions.

3.18 PILOT STUDIES

Pilot studies were conducted prior to the principal study, with four young female adults as well as two mothers from my extended family, facilitating access as compared with the difficulties I had recruiting females for the main study, to ensure that the research design was appropriate for investigating the aims of the study.

Although the interview schedules[15] did cover the research aims, problems emerged with how I was asking questions in a formal, structured format and, accordingly, too many question required 'yes' or 'no' answers rather than giving respondents' the scope to develop their answers further (e.g. 'Do you think your options are realistic?'). Asking questions in such a way highlighted how I was not an 'expert' with regards to my interview technique and was prone to committing errors. Consequently, the interview data I obtained through these pilot studies was inadequate as and I had to change how I asked questions, from 'closed' to 'open' questions; a technique I managed to develop as I conducted further pilot studies and far richer data was collected. Examples of questions asked to young adults include:

- What subjects are you currently studying?
- What do your parents think about your choices?
- There is a stereotypical view of Asian parents that they have high aspirations for their children – how do you feel about this?

[15] The interview schedules with all parents, teachers and young adults are in the Appendix

3.2 REFLEXIVITY AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The earlier section on ethnography, and how my own role had such a profound impact upon the research, inevitably raised the issue of reflexivity in this research and how I was able to explore, and bring to the fore, my own role within the research. Traditionally, both social and educational research, through imitating the 'natural' sciences, tried to present the researcher and social research as 'objective' (Walford, 1991). However, in recent years, there has been a greater acknowledgement that a search for objectivity within social research is undesirable and that "no human being can step outside of her or his humanity and view the world from no position at all" (Burr, 1995: 160). A constructionist approach, adopting a particular epistemology and ontology, which emphasises the multiplicity of possible readings from any interaction, a lack of objectivity, and stressing the significance of specific contexts and language use, therefore invites the researcher to acknowledge that:

> "…we are part and parcel of the psychological processes we are studying and so include ourselves in our analyses rather than view ourselves as neutral unbiased inquisitors." (Ahmed, 1996: 35)

If such notions are accepted, and accordingly drawn upon, the researcher is expected to question their own assumptions, to locate themselves within the research, and to acknowledge alternative interpretations of reality so that they may debate different points of view. Reflexivity, then, is a way of entering into dialogue in order to improve the research rather than being perceived as a tool to prevent criticism**.** However, there is little consensus on

what should constitute reflexivity; researchers employ varying forms and practices, incorporating both micro- and macro-approaches, to focus on different aspects of the research process. The different theoretical perspectives I drew upon as part of my 'syncretic' approach, including Bourdieuian notions of capital and habitus, and cultural identity theories of Brah and Hall, had an impact upon how I utilised reflexivity in this research.

3.21 Reflexivity and Language

One approach to exploring reflexivity focuses on the language used in co-constructions. Potter and Wetherell (1987) draw upon Wieder (1974) to argue that talk is both multi-formulative and multi-consequential and reflexivity for them signifies that talk is not only used to describe actions, it is "at the same time *part* of those things" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 182). Descriptions of something therefore are constitutive of that event; they are *about*, as well as a *part of*, the event and reflexivity brings greater attention to this (Potter, 1996a). I considered these ideas useful and, as I explore in the next chapter on the construction of subject positions, the language I used to ask questions was crucial to both self-constructions as well as to constructions of others, and could be both intentional and unintentional. For example, at times, I was constructed as 'middle-class' by some students because of the way I spoke - the wrong 'type' of slang. This was a form of cultural capital that I did not possess, starkly highlighting how I was 'different' from these students. Consequently, descriptions ceased to be seen as abstract and detached from the world, but instead refer to the activities that they are an intrinsic part of.

Although a version of reflexivity which focuses on language is certainly useful since it is intrinsic to any constructions made, there is a danger of examining the "internal workings of a piece of text and ignore its wider political implications" (Burr, 1995: 181) which means, for this study, that I had to also draw upon other notions of reflexivity which linked in with other aspects of my 'syncretic' approach.

3.22 Reflexivity and Power

The dynamics of power are emphasised in the other approach to reflexivity that I draw upon referring to how "both the researcher and researched are seen as collaborators in the construction of knowledge" (Tindall, 1994: 149). According to Usher and Edwards (1994) and Usher (1997), the 'con-text' and the 'sub-text' of research are a method of understanding this. Usher and Edwards (1994), examining an epistemic reflexivity, the 'sub-text' of research, argue that it is a method through which we, as researchers, can explore our immersion within 'epistemic communities'. Since epistemology is inherent within all research, it is "never 'innocent' because it always contains within itself a set of values – which means that there is always a *politics* of research, an implication of research with power relations" (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 149).

One of these implications, as Mama (1995) points out, is that recognition of the researcher as 'expert' in their subject gives their voice more 'authenticity' than the researched, particularly since they are in charge of the "whole

process of research production" (Oliver, 1992: 102) and, thus, their interpretations and analysis carry greater weight. This was certainly evident in this study, and, as seen earlier in this chapter, could also be important when I was trying to acquire a sample rather than solely when interpreting and analysing data; I decided which criteria were 'right' and 'wrong' for participants in order to take part in this study. However, as I illustrate later, power was not delineated in a simple dichotomy in this study, with the researcher all-powerful and participants powerless; instead, it fluctuated across a spectrum with participants and myself both having access to power at different points.

Furthermore, the autobiography or 'context' (Usher and Edwards, 1994; Usher, 1997) of the researcher is also important and is conveyed by the intersections of gender, 'race', ethnicity, social class and caste of the researcher which, rather than simply acknowledging, have an impact on every aspect of the research process, including how data is interpreted and analysed. Such notions link in with other aspects of my 'syncretic' constructionism, including Bourdieu's habitus and field and Hall and Brah's theorisations of identity, where individuals' identities, including their social class and gender, can have an impact within the social arenas, or fields, in which they interact and compete for resources. As explored in the previous chapter, although individuals can share a similar habitus, they can be positioned differently alongside other members in a similar field including the family and education; something which was apparent between young adults, their peers, and their parents who were positioned differently based upon

their gender, age and peer group membership which had a bearing upon how they constructed aspirations and identities, including for myself.

How I was constructed was intersected by social class, caste and gender and thus, the simple 'matching' of researcher to participants was considered too simplistic since different identities did not function "in any unitary or essential way" (Phoenix, 1994: 49), but varied according to context and framed within particular relations of power. Furthermore, the idiosyncrasies of my study meant that caste was also important. As Ghuman (1980) found, when studying Bhattra (trader) Sikhs in Cardiff, who had different migratory patterns compared with large-scale South Asian migration, he was considered an outsider because he was a member of the *Jatt* (farmer) caste – an issue which was pertinent in this study. Sikhs, rather than being a homogenous group, have many branches, some delineated by caste and, hence, a consequence of this was that I could never be a complete 'insider' with some members of my group. Subject-positionings based on caste were more prevalent with Sikh parents in this study as compared with their children. Parents were more likely to draw attention to my caste both during and after interviews, signalling how this was central to their habitus as compared with the younger generation.

I draw on Ahmed (1996) to suggest that we can never be a complete 'insider' with those we research because, as researchers, we operate from an elevated position within society, one automatically inscribed with greater power. Furthermore, as Ahmed argues, there is no indication that 'matching'

researcher and researched will produce more valid and meaningful knowledge as different researchers will produce equally valid and interesting knowledge. However, despite an 'insider' position increasing the likelihood of familiar issues to be overlooked, being an 'insider' can help the researcher to understand certain connotations and nuances associated with language and culture and it was useful to have this knowledge of both the school and the Sikhs in this study.

Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power was also incorporated into how I practiced reflexivity, adding to the 'syncretic' element of my approach. Drawing on Bourdieu was important to explore both the power relationship between participants and myself, and the subject-positions adopted; different positions could allow the individual to gain or lose status and thereby symbolic capital. As explored in the previous chapter, symbolic power, for Bourdieu, is concerned with transforming different forms of capital into those which gain credence in society, requiring recognition from group members if it is to be accrued or lost.

As I explore later in this chapter, the symbolic power I possessed through being positioned as the 'expert' in the field gave my position legitimacy throughout the research. However, rather than retaining symbolic power throughout the entire research process, I did acquire, accrue and lose power, as the 'recognition' I received from the group varied within different social and cultural contexts.

3.23 Reflecting On My Role Within This Research Study

This section of the chapter explores how I practised reflexivity to incorporate the assumptions I brought to the research about my 'own' Sikh group and the teachers at school. Such assumptions were important for how I interpreted data and how identities were constructed. I consider reflexivity as beginning immediately when the research questions are conceived; it is the researcher who decides upon the rationale for the study, the methodology to be employed, and the research design. Participants here have little, if any, input thereby investing the researcher with far greater power. However, with my own study, it was not quite so simple. My initial supervisors, when I began the PhD, were two 'white' women[16], from different theoretical backgrounds, who advised me on every aspect of the research, from the literature I read, to the research questions and the methodology behind the study. As such, my research study was intersected by 'race', ethnicity, social class and gender, which combined in unique and different ways, each playing a significant role on the construction of the research. My present supervisors are two 'white' men who guided me through the final stages of my PhD. Consequently, this new relationship is also delineated by such notions of 'race', ethnicity, social class and gender (and also expertise), with all of us positioned differently within the diaspora space, which has had a bearing upon how the study is perceived, at least by myself, and thus, shaped.

Issues of power were also pertinent when trying to recruit the sample and I was rendered relatively powerless during several occasions. I had initially

[16] An act of me constructing an identity for my supervisors. 'White' since it, just like other forms of categorising people, is not a homogeneous category.

intended to conduct interviews with five male and five female Sikh pupils, but only two girls agreed to participate after great difficulty. Such problems were envisaged before I began the research; gender was an explicit consideration along with notions of ‘izzat’ or family honour. As explored in the first chapter, since I am male, I felt that some Sikh parents considered it inappropriate for me to interview their daughters alone and I was positioned here within a cultural framework which structured appropriate and inappropriate forms of behaviour for different genders.

Several strategies were attempted to obtain the sample, such as meeting parents at the Parents’ Evening at school; talking to them when they came to pick their children up; and calling parents at home to try to get them to participate. As Phoenix (1994) argues, people can refuse to take part in the research which is an act of the researched possessing power. Unlike Phoenix (1994) however, I did not find that “it is rare for respondents to refuse to take part in a study when faced with a researcher” (Phoenix, 1994: 51). As the school had a high proportion of Sikh students, I envisaged that it would be easier for me to acquire a sample considering that the symbolic capital I possessed from studying a PhD would make Sikh parents more likely to want to be a part of the research. This was not to be the case as parents often were quite dismissive of the research. Rather than the PhD giving me greater symbolic capital, since it was in a social science, it was not considered ‘important’ enough to bestow a higher status on me, highlighting how certain courses and careers provided the individual with greater symbolic capital than others for some Sikh parents.

One possible explanation of this is my physical appearance. Sikhism, compared with other major worldly religions, is inscribed by five physical symbols, including the visual *kesh* – long hair tied in a turban. Thus, being a Sikh is often constructed in terms of a simple dichotomy – those who shave, seen as less 'traditional' and more 'westernised', and those who retain their hair, perceived as a more genuine form of Sikh. Here, I was positioned within religious and cultural frameworks - since I am a *sehajdari*, a clean shaven Sikh, I was instantly distinguishable from more 'authentic' looking Sikhs with turbans, placing me within a conspicuous power relationship where my physical appearance put me at a disadvantage; the loss of symbolic power having 'real' consequences within this particular context.

The ideas of Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1988, 1992), concerning how 'talk' has an impact upon constructions, was also significant for how I was constructed; how I spoke, the tone of my voice, and the language I employed all had a bearing upon the identities participants constructed for me. Parents were more likely to be dismissive if I did not speak to them in Punjabi, essentialised as an 'authentic' characteristic of being a Sikh, and constructed me as an 'outsider'. Nonetheless, I consciously embraced such a construction, rather than resisting, by re-constructing an identity for myself, through using Punjabi, so that I could be seen as a 'bona fide' Punjabi Sikh, in order to recruit a sample. This linguistic positioning was not only framed within cultural frames of reference, but also social class, varying according to if I interacted with young adults, their parents or teachers. Here, having the

linguistic resources to construct a greater ‘insider’ position was a real advantage over non-Sikh researchers who may not have had such resources.

Use of language was also relevant to the young adults and teachers. From talking to Sikh young adults to explain my research study, it was apparent that they were constructing a distinct middle-class identity for me through the language I used and how I enunciated and pronounced words. Although it was not something I had been aware of, it did have an impact upon my behaviour and I consciously began to alter the way I spoke, using the vernacular and colloquial with greater urgency, in order to construct an ‘insider’ identity, which I hoped would facilitate the recruitment of my sample. However, the use of the vernacular was not limited to gathering a sample; I was conscious that I was speaking in such a way in order to construct myself as ‘cool’ – attempting to fit in with the youth subcultures of the students. For example, I found myself using words such as ‘bare’ (meaning a lot), ‘jack’ (meaning nothing) and ‘hench’ (meaning strong) during the course of conversations with young adults. These attempts were ineffectual; young adults resisted my self-constructions by noting how I had the ‘wrong’ type of language. Furthermore, I did not always understand the language that students used. When I did not understand what ‘rents’ was, constructing it, in a very confused manner, as something concerning housing rent, I was verbally derided by students who told me it was a term for ‘parents’. This, instead, resulted in unflattering identities being constructed for me, positioning me as from a higher social class, and thus, locating me as a

linguistic ‘outsider’. The young adults were empowered here, forcing me to alter my behaviour. Hence, such identities were complex, being constructed and re-constructed through language, resisted and embraced, in a very particular context, around configurations of social class as well as youth subculture.

Interestingly, some identities, located within past experiences, were difficult to resist. As I was a former pupil at the school, and had been taught by some teachers who I interviewed, I was accustomed to constructing myself in a very distinct power relationship located within the diaspora space – that of ‘pupil’ and ‘teacher’. Although this ethnographic element enabled me to gain easier access to the school without much problems, such as with school records and getting teachers to take part in the study, I entered the setting with a degree of trepidation – my new role as an ‘expert’ in the field was in direct contrast to my former role as a ‘student’ with each role positioning me against teachers differently, highlighting the flexibility of subject-positions one can take and how my habitus had transformed, positioning me differently. As a student, I had been positioned as weaker than teachers who had more power within the school setting, but now I had more power because of the greater cultural capital I now possessed (highlighting the change in my own habitus from when I was student) through being an ‘expert’ on the topic, which gave me greater symbolic capital. This was evident when I took control to organise meetings with the Heads of Year concerning aspects of the research, including interview times with participants, rooms I could use and confidentiality issues. However, this issue was more complex than a simple

shift in the dynamics of power, and varied according to the particular teacher. For example, with the 'newer' Head of Year, it was easier to position myself as an 'expert' since he did not know me as a student compared with the 'older' Head of Year who had and, consequently, with 'older' teachers I was still likely to position myself as a 'student'. This was apparent when I was planning interview schedules with the 'older' Head of Year in her office. I felt uneasy about being positioned as the 'expert' and the previous role of 'student', one which I had occupied for several years, was prevalent over my 'newer' role in this familiar setting and, thus, it was harder to always consider myself as an expert.

Rather than always being uncomfortable in my new role as 'expert', it varied depending upon the context. I embraced my 'middle-class' identity at various school events when trying to recruit participants, and being associated with teachers gave my role greater legitimacy when speaking to parents; another form of symbolic power which I exploited in order to acquire a sample. This was quite successful as parents were less likely to be dismissive (although some still were), yet, alternatively, this often resulted in students equating me with the school and, thus, being seen in a negative light.

Being a former student at the school was also important during interviews with teachers. Although I was now the expert, in control of the direction of the interview in order to obtain the information I sought, the power shifted during interviews between myself and some of the teachers. Once again, with 'older' teachers, my previous educational experiences came up during interviews,

often as examples as to how things had changed. Consequently, my former student identity came to the fore, making it difficult to embrace my new role. The location of interviews with teachers and pupils was also important. At times, they were conducted in the Head of Year's office, a site I, and current students, associated with 'being in trouble' which made me feel uncomfortable and less in control of interviews with teachers despite being the 'expert'. A complex interplay of power tied in with subject-positions and different contextual settings was at work here, shifting before, during and after interviews and, as such, my role at the school was dynamically constructed and reconstructed, and shifted between former and newer positions.

The interview settings were also important when interviewing parents in their homes. Although I was made to feel welcome at everyone's house, I did feel very awkward at times, especially when I visited one young adult's house to speak to her father with the prior knowledge that he had been physically abusing his child. My position here was complex as social class, gender and caste intersected and interwove throughout the process. Moreover, I was meant to be more powerful as the 'expert' on the topic, but also constructed as weaker, notions of power here based around culturally located ideas of 'respect for elders' (Ghuman and Dosanjh, 1997). However, the overarching theme was one of discomfort, where I knew I had to be very careful with regards to what I said in case there were later repercussions for the student, and, as such, when the father questioned what his child wanted to do in the future, I chose to feign ignorance in order to protect the young adult. Such

interviews were, at times, within earshot of their spouses, meaning that sometimes parents were guarded as to what they chose to reveal. Issues relating to gender were certainly important at the intra-family level, as well as between mothers and myself; it was not always considered appropriate to leave me, a male, alone with a female member of a Sikh family.

I have also been rendered relatively powerless during other points in the research process. At various moments, pupils were absent from school when interviews were scheduled, interview rooms had been double-booked, and, on occasions, teachers did not want pupils to miss certain lessons. During some interviews, it was difficult to encourage pupils, parents and teachers to talk, not achieving sufficient data for analysis. Furthermore, there have been other issues which occurred during the course of the research which cannot be accounted for when planning research. Two interviews with teachers were stolen from my car, which had to be conducted again, meaning that these teachers had a greater idea of questions to be asked and how to respond accordingly. In addition, my house was burgled resulting in a laptop, with recently compiled field notes, being stolen. These occurrences could not have been foreseen and I was left with a burgeoning sense of powerlessness.

During interviews I had far greater power; I decided upon the structure of the interview, the areas that I considered worthy of exploration, the follow-up questions to ask, and when I was satisfied that the relevant areas had been covered. My subject positioning during the course of the research was also

complex and intricate; positions were constructed based on age, gender, 'race', ethnicity & caste. For example, during one interview with a mother, I was positioned as younger (Ghuman and Dosanjh, 1997, 1998 have found the notion of ‘respect’ as very important for elders), as 'expert' in the field being discussed, as male, and as of a higher caste than the mother in question. It is here where having an ‘insider’ position to an extent and accounting for the assumptions I was bringing to the research helped with an understanding of the subject-positions constructed. Each subject-position was fluid, inscribed with different accesses to power, coming to the fore during certain parts of the interview and withdrawing during others. On occasions more than one position was held simultaneously. These positions were not fixed, however, and changed according to the topic being discussed at the time, so power relations fluctuated in, and during, each interview.

Nevertheless, attempts have been made to incorporate the researched into the study. I answered any questions asked by participants before, during and after the interview, and have asked them for further clarification later if I have required anything. For example, during one interview with a parent, I was asked several times if Information Technology was a good subject for their son to study. Incorporating participants further into the research was not easy. The young adults and teachers had GCSE examinations to contend with, and parents were largely unavailable after interviews due to pressures of work, and often, more importantly, they did not want to continue to take part. Thus, attempts at further incorporating the participants into the research can, again, be a futile endeavour.

Overall, this research challenged me to reflect upon, and examine, my own identity; who we are, and how and why we respond in certain ways in certain contexts, is frequently something that we can take for granted. I did share many commonalties with the researched, but also many important differences which I had not previously contemplated. An ‘insider’ status enabled me to take a particular standpoint, allowing me to understand certain nuances of culture, of youth subculture and how other important factors, such as gender and social class, had a role to play. Simultaneously, my ‘outsider’ status, which was constructed for me by young adults and parents, created barriers, and prevented me from recruiting the sample I had ideally desired. As such, subject-positions, constructed by myself and others, resisted and embraced, have had an intrinsic role to play on how I responded to, interpreted, and, ultimately, analysed the data. I explore this in greater depth, with explicit examples from the research, in the subsequent chapter.

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Kvale's (1996) three principal ethical concerns are considered useful in this thesis, focusing on informed consent, confidentiality and consequences. Informed consent involves informing the research subjects about the purposes and aims of the study, the main aspects of the design and any possible harm and benefits that may come to them if they choose to participate. As Kvale (1996) points out, obtaining informed consent is not as simple as this and not without problems; questions concerned with who should give consent arise, and with students it could be "the children themselves, the school superintendent, the school board, the teacher or the parents" (Kvale, 1996: 113). Further questions arise to do with how much information should be offered to potential participants.

In this study, consent was sought from all groups involved to participate. The young adults' consent was required for them to participate; the parents' consent was required since the young adults were aged 15 or 16; and the teachers' consent was required so that pupils could be interviewed at school. Furthermore, no attempt was made to hide any information regarding the study when seeking consent. The purposes of the study did not involve any form of dishonesty allowing me to be as open and transparent as possible.

The second issue relates to the confidentiality of the research, involving the protection of participants' privacy. In this study, participants were informed that their accounts would be kept confidential when asking for consent before the interviews. Also, pseudonyms were used for all participants' names to

further protect their confidentiality, although certain participants were made aware before the research that it would be easier to identify them because their aspirations were unusual, allowing them an opportunity to withdraw if they so wished.

The final principle according to Kvale (1996) relates to the consequences of a study. The researcher here has to consider the possible benefits as well as potential risks to the researched, as I had to do with the young adult who was being physically abused at home. I had to be extra sensitive so as not to cause any further issues and I did this through making it clear to parents before conducting interviews with them that I could not reveal any information about the child in question and that this was something that I had done with other participants. Furthermore, I had to be very aware about how I spoke to these parents as I could have unintentionally revealed something about their child, which they did not consider appropriate, or revealing how I felt about this particular situation. However, I was aware that having this information about this particular child had an impact upon analysis; I was more likely to see the parents negatively.

3.4 TRANSCRIPTION OF DATA

43 interviews were transcribed verbatim from the recordings in keeping with the analytic position undertaken and two interviews with two mothers were also translated from Punjabi to English. This process is not without difficulty since transferring data from oral to spoken language is difficult; each form of communication is inherent with particular rules and regulations. Transcriptions are then decontextualised conversations; social constructions in their own right rather than a form of mapping and representing the world.

According to Taylor (2001), transcriptions are not neutral, complete records of the interview conversation; certain things are both included and excluded at the discretion of the researcher, including body language, facial expressions and details of the location which could be important to any construction. Although these extra forms of transcription notation were not used in this study, because of the greater focus on the habitus and capitals of participants and how these had an impact upon their constructions of aspirations and identity, what is included/ excluded demonstrates how power is inscribed within transcriptions.

Furthermore, as Taylor (2001) argues, forms of transcription notation highlight the particular form of analysis that the researcher is using. In this study, a lack of focus on the more intricate transcription symbols, showing for example the length of pauses, meant that the focal point of this study was based on the themes which emerged during constructions rather than on investigating 'talk' in its own right. Instead, my approach to transcription

follows Willig (2001) who argues that that the method employed should be appropriate for the theoretical approach. As such, there were five principal transcription notations that were used:

- A full stop within two round brackets e.g. **(.)** – a short pause in the talk
- Round brackets around a word e.g. **(okay)** – to signal when I had spoken during a participant's extract
- Ellipsis **...** – when the talk tailed off
- Two forward slashes ***//*** - to indicate when talk overlapped between myself and participants
- Square brackets around a word e.g. **[police]** – my insertion for example to clarify various forms of slang used by participants

In addition, quotation lengths varied with both longer and shorter quotations employed to illustrate points depending upon the theme I was exploring.

3.5 EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

To check my interpretations of data, I employed 'member-checking' and 'audit-trail', as well as relying on guidance from literature I had read. During preliminary analysis of data, I showed summaries to participants who were then asked to comment, allowing them to verify the authenticity of interpretations and to adjust errors and challenge incorrect interpretations if required. Furthermore, I employed a physical and intellectual 'audit-trail', a description of the research steps including the development and reporting of data, which fitted in with the theme of transparency in this research, to establish the 'confirmability' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of findings. As such, all raw data, notes and summaries, and my research diary, were employed and used for interpretations and analysis, and checked by my supervisors to ensure greater credibility, and intellectual development was also recorded, reflecting on how my thinking evolved throughout the research process, guided by my supervisors and literature I read.

3.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data obtained from the interviews was considerable and, initially, overwhelming. However, from transcribing the interviews and reading them several times I gained a greater feel for participants' accounts. My 'syncretic' constructionist approach was employed to analyse the data which drew on several theoretical perspectives including the cultural identity theories I outlined earlier and Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital.

I began by forming tables for each young adult. Initially, these focused on general information, such as parents' occupations, area of origin and caste, which steadily became more detailed, concentrating upon their aspirations and themes, including notions of gender, caste and social class. In addition, tables were drawn up exploring the resources young adults used in the construction of aspirations, including their extended social networks as well as 'cold' sources of knowledge such as university league tables. Furthermore, such tables were also constructed for parents and teachers and this allowed an exploration of individual accounts alongside accounts of other members of their group (i.e. parents with other parents) and within clusters of parent, young adult and teacher.

Through such tables, it was possible to combine certain themes and issues which emerged during the research in order to investigate the range of resources and capitals young adults drew upon and how they employed these when constructing subject-positions. For example, when exploring the various sources of information that a young adult employed, I was able to

group data within each cluster of parent, teacher and young adult, as well as against what other young adults had said. It also permitted me to investigate their 'talk', as I was able to explore the linguistic resources they were drawing upon, as well as the various subject-positions they were constructing, infused with different levels of power. As such, it was possible to explore young adults' habitus, how they constructed forms of identity, and how different linguistic resources were employed when speaking to their peers as compared with their teachers and parents, emphasising how social and cultural issues had an impact on what was and was not permissible. Here, it was apparent that my own role was all-important; my own assumptions and interpretations were crucial to how I interpreted events and actions and, thus, formed the basis of my analysis. For example, it was possible to see how, at times, how cultural nuances were important for how young adults were constructed by their parents which I was able to understand and interpret accordingly since I was an 'insider' to an extent.

3.7 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SMALL-SCALE STUDIES

There are several strengths and weaknesses to having such a small-scale study. Firstly, a smaller study can help with a greater exploration of complex inter-relationships because of the narrower focus. Through limiting the scope of the research, emphasis is placed on the in-depth understandings of what is to be studied, which statistical data cannot hope to do, and, through grounding the study, places greater emphasis on the context. This gave me the opportunity in this study to examine individuals in detail and their relationships with other participants in various contexts, but also, crucially, how they were intersected by gender, social class and caste and educational policy, an important aspect of the research and one which would have been harder to explore in a larger study.

Since the focus on smaller sample studies is more in-depth, they can result in unexpected and unusual accounts and issues which perhaps would not have occurred with a larger sample. In this study, it was possible to explore interesting configurations of young adults' identities through observing and interviewing them, conveying the fluidity in the positions they constructed and how these were context-based. For example, one Hindu girl who regularly visited the *Gurdwara* (Sikh temple) wanted to take part in the study, demonstrating how her religious identity was not fixed into a 'neat' category but far more intricate. As such, it was possible to explore patterns and themes which were not so prevalent, as well as shed greater light on those that were, and to cross- compare data. Moreover, it allowed me to

understand individuals' interpretations of constructs, such as identity, providing me with a description of their personal experiences of phenomena, which they were able to describe in rich detail since they were situated within those local contexts.

A further advantage of a smaller sample size is that it can explain the processes involved in relationships, illuminating the ways in which various factors can work with and against each other. In this way, such studies can help to shed light on how relationships can function. As an example, rather than simply equating higher social class as leading to better qualifications with 'better' jobs as some statistical data can show, the future decision-making process was far more complex, working differently for different young adults and their families, in a variety of contexts. Although partly positioned against the aims of larger quantitative research, this smaller scale study can point to new and different ways of understanding, identifying possible flaws and areas of improvement in educational policy with regard to these issues.

Greater flexibility is provided with smaller studies as the researcher is able to adjust the sample size according to the demands of the study. I was able to take advantage of this flexibility, adapting the study according to the new and interesting developments as well as problems. Consequently, I was able to adjust for the difficulties in acquiring an equal number of boys and girls in the sample, able to account for my assumptions as they became more important during the study, and able to place greater attention on the identity construction of young Sikh adults, which became increasingly important as the study progressed.

There are also several limitations of having a smaller sample with the role of the researcher gaining greater prominence. There is a lack of objectivity in studies such as this, with the researcher's input, knowledge and interpretations given greater importance. I had to decide upon the focus of the study, the questions to ask, what to observe, and what was worthy of recording. Additionally, I chose which issues were important and how to represent participants' accounts within these themes. Therefore, this research cannot, and does not, seek to be objective and, although there is a degree of trepidation over this form of research, researchers can try to make the research process, as I explored earlier, more transparent through conducting reflexivity, highlighting how and why researchers make certain judgement calls over others.

The data acquired can be prodigious, meaning that not all the data is employed and some participant's accounts can be given more attention and prominence than others. The researcher has greater power here, deciding which issues and themes are worthy of bringing to the fore, and others to background. Despite trying to draw quotations from all participants, I realise that I did not do so in an equal manner; some participants were given greater prominence than others, particularly since young males outnumbered females, and revisiting data later would likely reveal other topics worthy of analysis. I tried to address this imbalance by including more accounts from young females.

Although such data can reveal complexities in phenomena, prodigious data can mean that there is a problem of representation. Writing about individual's

accounts often focuses on one part, meaning that other aspects of their 'story' can be inadvertently obscured. There can be several ways to present the same set of themes, each of which can be different in its approach, and are dependent upon the researcher's theoretical perspective and highlight how the researcher has greater power.

The results from smaller sample studies are difficult to present in numerical form, and, as a result, are difficult to generalise. There is no way of generalising the findings from this study to other young Sikhs from other schools, both in London and nationally. In addition, since the sample is small and the idiosyncrasies of this study context based, it is impossible to argue that they are representative of the wider Sikh population.

3.8 REFLECTION ON THE STUDY

On reflection, the research design was suitable for the study as it allowed me to accomplish the research aims and questions. The assumptions I brought to the study, integral to interpreting and analysing accounts, meant that a method was required which would allow me to explore the constructions of participants as well as incorporate my own role within the research. The semi-structured interviews allowed a greater focus on reflexive practices where I could explore how nuances of power fluctuated before, during and after interviews as well as explore linguistic resources drawn upon.

Both formal data, from participants in interviews, and informal data, through observing young adults at school, was important in this study allowing identities, and their construction, to be investigated. The data acquired from participants was useful, allowing an exploration of constructions within, and across, clusters of parents, teachers and young adults. Here, inter-generational differences were evident; certain issues, such as caste and gender, were more important for some parents than some young adults. In addition, the data allowed an understanding of how British-Sikh identity is constructed by both parents and young adults and how, on occasions, it was located within broader categories of 'Indian' and 'Asian' rather than exclusively 'Sikh'.

An unforeseen problem which had not been envisaged at the beginning of the research was the recent upheaval at the school. Teacher retention was low, in accordance with similar phenomena at the national level, with a

number of teachers leaving at the time of the research and a high proportion of supply teachers. Consequently, some form tutors had not been with their students for long and did not have much information about their future aspirations. At the same time, this had a significant impact upon parent/teacher relationships since parents did not always know who their child's tutor was and contact was infrequent, if at all.

In addition, initially the sample was due to contain five boys and five girls allowing a greater exploration of gender and how it had a role to play on the construction of aspirations. The difficulty in obtaining the sample, however, meant that only two girls agreed to take part in the study as compared with the pilot studies, when I was able to draw upon my extended family for participants. It would have been interesting to have more input from female students, especially when exploring the role gender had to play on the construction of aspirations. I have tried to address this imbalance by giving the female students a greater 'voice' in this study.

Furthermore, although the study is written in English, some interviews with parents were conducted in Punjabi and there were some problems with translation as, at times, there is no direct translation between the languages. However, being a linguistic 'insider' here, to some extent, allowed me to better translate these interviews than an 'outsider'.

Although the collection of data was extensive and did include parents, teachers and young adults, it would have been useful, when exploring the

construction of British-Sikh identity, to have conducted interviews or focus groups with the peers of students. In this way, it would have been possible to greater explore collective, as well as individual, constructions of identity and the role they had to play upon the construction of future aspirations. Similarly, it could have been useful to interview members of extended families in order to explore different constructions of identity and the role they had to play upon the construction of aspirations.

The dual 'insider' identity I had added an interesting dimension to this study compared with other research. It allowed access to a larger group of Sikh students and parents, as well as teachers who readily agreed to participate in the research. Moreover, I was able to gain access to participants at formal school functions which perhaps would have been harder if I had not had an 'insider' role. Although the assumptions I brought to the research, both about the teachers and school, and 'Sikh' parents and young adults, could have resulted in certain things being overlooked, it was invaluable as it had a direct bearing upon how I interpreted and analysed actions, 'talk' and data and allowed me, through reflexivity, to explore my own role within the research, rather than neglecting it, thereby allowing me to give my own role more prominence rather than place it in the background.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have explored the research design of the study and how it was based on a particular epistemology and ontology, located within broad postmodernist traditions of social constructionism and ethnography. As well as stressing the importance of context in any interpretation, I brought assumptions about Sikhs and the school which I acknowledged through reflexivity. These epistemological assumptions had an impact upon the research design and I decided upon semi-structured interviews to best explore the research aim and questions. Other aspects of the research design were examined before exploring ethical issues, the transcription and analysis of the data, the strengths and limitations of such small-scale research, before reflecting upon the study.

The two literature review chapters have established that there are a number of issues which are important to investigate, including the aspirations of Sikh young adults, and how they are structured within educational policy. The data generated by the research will be used to explore the aims of the study in the two data chapters. The first chapter explores constructions of identities, including shedding light on British-Sikh identities. Such identities are important for the AimHigher programme, where middle-class identities have been constructed as the ideal, compared with the working-class who are positioned against this. Identities were also important when deciding upon which students were eligible for selection in widening participation activities, with certain identities, including those around hegemonic masculinity,

constructed as incompatible with academic work by teachers responsible for choosing students.

The second data chapter focuses on the main research question on the aspirations of young adults. There is an exploration of how aspirations are interrelated, the various social and cultural resources drawn upon, and how the intersections of social class, gender and caste can have a role to play. Furthermore, there is an investigation of the interrelationship between parents, teachers and young adults in how aspirations are constructed, before exploring stereotypical views of ‘Asian’ parents as having unrealistic aspirations.

CHAPTER 4:

CONSTRUCTIONS OF SUBJECT-POSITIONS: FORMS OF SPEAKING AND BEING AMONGST PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary issues arising from literature on aspirations and educational policy was the importance of identities when constructing aspirations. Explorations of identity are important when examining the educational and occupational aspirations of young adults since different identities, such as those based around gender and social class, acted as a form of structure, allowing certain future choices to be considered, and prohibiting others. These forms of identity were interlinked and intersected each other, acting differently for different students and could be culturally located, such as with constructions of future female aspirations and choices, or positioned through the peer group, including those based upon performances of 'hegemonic' masculinity. Some of these identities were considered as incompatible with academic success by teachers who were responsible for selecting young adults for the AimHigher programme. This chapter then concerns some of the subject-positions that were constructed by all participants in the research, including myself.

Through using language, subjects constructed intersecting and interweaving identities positioning themselves alongside, and against, others, in various relationships imbued with different levels of power. Such constructions and positioning occurred throughout the research process including before, and

after, interviews. The context of participants talk was important, helping to understand how and why certain resources were drawn upon over others when constructing future aspirations. Hence, there is greater realism in my approach than a strictly social constructionist approach might advocate.

As well as interview data, notes from my research diary were drawn upon. These notes were just as important as the interviews as they helped to contextualise initial, and later, thoughts on young adults, parents and teachers. Furthermore, they had a bearing upon how I positioned myself alongside, and against, participants and how I subsequently analysed data.

During the research process, I did not have an equal amount of time with all three groups of participants; it was predominantly young adults who I was frequently in contact with during free periods, including their registration period and break times. Consequently, constructions focusing on young adults had greater input into this chapter and, thus, the first three sections in this chapter concentrate on them and how their identities were fluid, dynamic and changed according to particular socio-cultural contexts.

The first section explores how I constructed young adults during this research. Such constructions are based on participants in this study and their peers who were in the background when I was trying to acquire a sample. Next, I examine the various constructions of gender including femininity, masculinity and the importance of ‘izzat’; rather than young adults simply fitting into ‘types’, there was a blurring of boundaries. The final section on

young adults concerns constructions of British-Sikh identity. Constructions here, instead of negotiated around ‘Sikhs’ as I had originally theorised, could be broader, with ‘Indian’ and ‘Asian’ frequently drawn upon by young adults. Configurations of caste were also explored here and how they were more important to parents than young adults, especially for endogamous marriage practices rather than for future aspirations. The final two sections explore the subject-positions of parents and teachers. Varying constructions were prevalent here, with both parents and teachers using different strategies to present themselves.

Throughout this chapter, the notion of reflexivity is paramount. ‘Where’ participants spoke from, ‘why’ they did so, and the ensuing subject-positions they constructed were intricately linked to constructions of myself. If the implications of a syncretic constructionist approach, placing greater emphasis upon reflexivity and a greater transparency within research are to be drawn upon, it is imperative to locate myself within this research, which I attempt to do throughout the chapter.

4.1. MY CONSTRUCTIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS

4.11 MY POSITIONING DURING THE RESEARCH

Throughout this research, I constructed a range of identities for young adults, parents and teachers, including for those who did not agree to take part in the study. Here, the subject positions I constructed for them were, at times, based upon my 'taken-for-granted' assumptions and, thus, before exploring the constructions of young adults, my position in this study needs to be clarified since it was complicated and had an intricate role to play. As discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter, I constructed myself as being a 'Sikh', male, working-class, *Jatt* (the highest, farmer caste in Sikhism), relatively young (was in my early 20s when the research was conducted) and a former student at the school, all of which had an impact upon how I constructed other participants in the study. Different identities were created, intersected by social class, gender and caste, which at times interwove with each other, and, through this positioning, individuals could be constructed as both 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

A research journal was kept during the course of the research, recording personal thoughts and feelings about the research, as well as those on potential participants, which I draw upon. Through such entries, I constructed both positive and negative identities for young adults, both Sikh and non-Sikh, before, during, and after interviews.

4.12 MY COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS

Identities of young adults were important to explore as they could impact upon whether they were included in widening participation schemes, having a subsequent impact upon their aspirations and choices open to them. Through their constructions of myself, it was possible to shed light on their identities and how and why these were not considered appropriate for the AimHigher programme by teachers responsible for the selection process. Young males were often described by myself as "uninterested" and "disinterested" in my research journal when trying to recruit them for interviews. Alternatively, young women were described as "polite" and "interested" and based upon whether they asked questions about the research and if they made eye contact. When explaining the aims and purpose of my research, I described boys as demonstrating "negative body language such as rolling their eyes" which I took for boredom and apathy. Girls, on the other hand, were more proactive in coming to me and asking if they could take part in the study. For example, after I agreed to interview Kiran, I wrote in my journal:

> ***Research Journal on Kiran (middle-class girl[17]) -***
> *"She also mentioned two of her friends wanted to know why I haven't asked them yet. I gave her two letters for her friends which will let them know what the research is about and will see them Friday morning."*

[17] Defined according to her father's profession. The social class of pupils was defined according to their parent's occupation (whichever parent was classified higher according to the government tables).

I constructed Kiran as ‘proactive’ here and, despite being middle-class, with research indicating that such pupils were more likely to be proactive in coming forward because of their habitus (Reay, 2000), this was not solely based upon social class, as I considered girls in general as more positive about the research and positioned opposite to ‘negative’ boys. Here, I was linking social class and certain forms of identity as more ‘acceptable’, assumptions which could have been important for teachers when they decided which students would participate in widening participation schemes. For example, although some boys, as I discuss later, demonstrated a ‘cool’ disinterest in academic work which gave them greater capital amongst their peers, this could have been constructed as a disinterest in academic work and more widely in education.

My constructions of students certainly varied according to the setting and whether they were by themselves or in a larger group conveying fluidity in constructions as opposed to the degree of fixity in policies. At school, students were usually in larger groups with their peers and thereby presented a different ‘face’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987), intersected by gender, and constructed alongside notions of being ‘cool’ and ‘fitting in’. When I attended a Sixth Form Open Evening, which I saw as a prime opportunity to recruit a sample, I found myself constructing a range of identities for young men:

> ***Research Journal on Young Males at Sixth Form Open Evening –*** *“A lot of the students have a certain way of dressing, ‘baggy’ clothing in particular, and the*

way they act reflects this. They think they are 'gangstas' and some, not all, also see this as a way of ignoring me, or refusing to listen to what I have to say. I don't like them at all as they're the ones who are the most disrespectful and find them a bit intimidating. Also, in a way I'm glad that they aren't going to take part as I'm fearful that they might not take the research seriously and may mess about."

As Archer (1998) has argued in her research on female gangs, both group and individual identities are demonstrated through style of dress and appearance. Here, I constructed the way young males dressed, in 'baggy clothing' with how I expected them to behave, as 'gangstas'; a form of 'African-American' identity located firmly within popular culture, particularly hip-hop music. Also, inherent within this construction was an expectation of 'rudeness'; a construction that they themselves saw as positive and upheld, seeing it as a form of being 'cool', and thus ignored me which I found 'most disrespectful'. The group identity was important here for them; they did not want to lose 'face' amongst their peers and therefore demonstrated a particular form of 'hegemonic' masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) imbued with a need to 'fit in'. Such forms of masculinity functioned as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985) within their peer group, constructing 'right' and 'wrong' forms of behaviour, in turn providing them with greater symbolic capital and, thus, symbolic power, particularly in this context. Such young men were more likely to be excluded

from the AimHigher programme; this form of identity was not constructed as compatible with academic success by teachers responsible for selecting students for the scheme. Instead, their performances of masculinity could result in them being constructed against the middle-class ideal for possessing the 'wrong' capital and habitus in order to be successful in HE. However, rather than seeing this as a problem, their peer group status was all-important for them, conflicting with, and taking precedence over, their academic work.

Two conditions can lead to symbolic capital coming to the fore. The first, involves the possession of symbolic capital and how this can be given an 'authenticity'. The second condition depends upon how symbolic power can have 'real' effects through recognition by members of a group. For Bourdieu, symbolic power can be used by those members of a group who possess symbolic capital in order to bring change or maintain the status quo. Since I did not possess the requisite symbolic capital to be a member of this subgroup, I had little, if any, symbolic power and, hence, found them 'intimidating'. It was apparent that although we may have shared similar 'beings', our 'becomings' were very different, defined within the school culture in which we were positioned at different points. Notions of hegemonic masculinity are explored in greater depth later in the chapter.

Furthermore, in this extract, I was employing 'category entitlement' (Potter, 1996), using categories to provide a degree of authenticity to the knowledge within this particular context, and, through 'stake confession', I was

attempting to acknowledge and foreground *how* and *why* I was constructing these students in this way. Notions of power were certainly evident; the boys used ‘intimidating’ behaviour to gain control of the interaction. Constructing the young males in this way had an impact upon how I considered they would behave during interviews, being ‘fearful’ that they would not take ‘the research seriously’, instead, seeing it as an opportunity to ‘mess about’. As such, I was constructing a very fixed and static identity for them, contrary to my theoretical position which perceives identity as more fluid and dynamic, dependent upon context and in a state of constant flux. However, rather than being seen as possessing greater agency as to how they could behave, since their parents were not with them, they still had constraints upon how they could behave which were also delineated by power. They chose, in part, to position themselves from within, and alongside, their peer group or risk being constructed as an ‘outsider’ and face exclusion from the group; a risk they did not think was worthy of consideration since it could lead to a loss of symbolic capital and power.

Similarly, I did not have as much agency over my own behaviour; it was partly restricted by how I was expected to behave as the ‘researcher’, but also by how pupils constructed identities for me and my attempts at resisting them. For example, I had been given my own desk to give my role a degree of formality and legitimacy, which also identified me with the school. I had hoped this would make it easier to acquire a sample and, thus, embraced being identified with the school. However, the group dynamics of the young men resulted in their constructions gaining greater authenticity amongst

them; identifying me with the school, I was readily dismissed for constructing the ‘wrong’ type of masculinity and, instead, was forced to try to change my ‘becoming’ to gain acceptance, which was not easy to do as constructions could be dismissed.

It was apparent that these young men were constructing a distinct middle-class identity for me through the language I used and how I enunciated and pronounced words. Although it was not something I had been aware of, it did have an impact upon my behaviour and I consciously began to alter the way I spoke, using the vernacular and colloquial in order to construct an ‘insider’ identity with these young men, an attempt at constructing a form of masculinity that fitted in with their youth subculture. For example, from the research diary, I found myself using words such as ‘bare’ (meaning a lot), ‘jack’ (meaning nothing) and ‘hench’ (meaning strong) during the course of conversations with these pupils. These attempts were ineffectual; young men resisted my self-constructions by noting how I had the ‘wrong’ type of language. Furthermore, I did not always understand the language that students used. When I did not understand what ‘rents’ was, constructing it, in a very confused manner, as something concerning housing rent, I was verbally derided by students who told me it was a term for ‘parents’. This, instead, resulted in unflattering identities being constructed for myself, positioning me as from a higher social class, wearing the ‘wrong’ clothes, and, thus, locating me as a linguistic and cultural ‘outsider’. Issues of ‘stake’ (Potter, 1996) were important here; these students could gain symbolic

capital from deriding my behaviour, strengthening their position in their peer group.

In addition, this had an impact upon my attempts at constructing a hegemonic form of masculinity; forms of language were imperative to how masculinity was constructed and, since I did not use the ‘right’ form of language, I was constructed as a ‘nerd’. The young adults were empowered here, forcing me to unsuccessfully alter my behaviour showing that although identity construction could be fluid, it would not always be accepted. Such identities were constructed alongside and against other members of the same space, showing how they despite having similar ‘beings’, they were all constructing new ‘routes’ and avenues for themselves. Hence, such identities were complex and intersecting and interweaving with each other, being constructed and re-constructed through physical appearance as well as language, resisted and embraced, in a very particular context, around configurations of social class as well as youth subculture. For these young adults, in this context, the construction of their identities was far more important than any discussion of their future aspirations, stressing how they were very much focused on short-term, immediate goals which an increased symbolic status amongst peers could bring. The AimHigher programme was lacking here since there was a failure to sufficiently devote enough attention to construction of these identities and how important their maintenance and reproduction were for young adults. Their peer group identities were positioned against the middle-class ideal favoured and any attempts at academic work could lead to this identity being compromised. Thus, teachers

responsible for selecting students for widening participation schemes were likely to construct performances of these identities unfavourably.

The assumptions I brought to the research were also pertinent when discussing my research notes on young women; girls at this Sixth Form evening were constructed differently and positioned against boys:

> *"**Research Journal** – Girls are different – they don't act like 'gangstas', they do gather around me and ask questions but not as the boys do which can be intimidating at times. Don't mind the girls as much- though even a few of them don't even listen when I try to talk to them and just seem to laugh a lot which I find very rude."*

I constructed girls as 'different' and in opposition to boys; their behaviour was not 'intimidating' since they did not act like 'gangstas', resulting in more favourable constructions. I positioned these girls from my habitus, as to how I expected them to behave, and the forms of behaviour I considered appropriate and inappropriate, which were, in part, culturally based. Thus, girls were seen as more acceptable, although some of them were 'rude' for not listening. Complexities of power were present in such constructions based upon trying to gain control of the interaction. Since I was present in a formal role at the Sixth Form Evening in order to recruit a sample for this study, the young women thus 'gather[ed] around me' and 'ask[ed] questions'. However, rather than simply accepting my role, some of them used humour ('just laugh a lot') in attempting to gain control, rendering me with a sense of

helplessness with regards to what strategy I should employ in order to try to regain command, something which I was not able to do even though this was a different strategy compared with what the young men employed.

Peer group identities, particularly concerning gender, were certainly important for young adults; the construction and maintenance of such identities having an impact upon how they were constructed both implicitly in policy and more explicitly by teachers, limiting their chances for getting selected. Such identities were also important for the young adults in this study's sample which I explore later in the chapter.

4.13 My Individual Constructions of Young Adults

Group identities, and sustaining them, were important here and young adults often behaved differently when they were on their own. During post-interview notes, I constructed students differently from when they were with their peers:

> ***Research Journal notes on Permjeet (working-class boy) immediately after the interview:*** *"Quite nice but the image he presents with friends is very different from that at home and when he is alone with me. Doesn't talk very much and doesn't seem very bright."*

> ***Research Journal notes on Amarpreet (middle-class boy) immediately after the interview:*** *"Quite a nice boy. He was polite and intelligent."*

> ***Research Journal notes on Kiran (middle-class girl) immediately after the interview****: "Get the impression that she works very hard and will do very well but is not considered to be 'cool' or one of the popular kids. She was quite nice if a little quiet."*

I used more positive language to describe students than when they were with their peers, with 'quite nice' being repeated for all of them. The context here, in a more formal interview setting based in the Head of Year's office, was important; the office had a greater authority compared with the desk at the Sixth Form Open Evening and I was constructed as being part of the school establishment by students. Since they were interviewed individually, young adults did not have group identities to uphold so behaved differently. In this setting, the formal language I employed was not seen as a disadvantage, but instead was appropriate for the setting, stressing the importance of context, and, therefore, I was not constructed as a 'linguistic outsider' as I had been before. Furthermore, power infused my account; apart from being in control over the interview, I constructed students as not 'very bright', as 'polite and intelligent' and as not 'cool' or 'popular' with my 'expert' role in such a setting, giving my labels more authenticity and silencing the voices of students. The language these students used was important. Since Amarpreet and Kiran, both middle-class, spoke 'properly', I constructed them as having the 'right'

form of cultural capital and identified them as 'fitting in' with myself since our 'becomings' were more similar as compared with Permjeet. As such, I positioned Amarpreet and Kiran differently within the diaspora space, constructing them as 'linguistic insiders' and, thus, as more 'intelligent' than Permjeet highlighting how social class, for me, intersected and interwove these interactions, although they may not have done so for these students. In this way, my constructions of these students also linked in with the AimHigher programme; it was I who was constructing the working-class student, Permjeet, as 'lacking' requisite habitus and capitals in order to be successful in education as compared with the middle-class students.

4.14 My Constructions of Young Adults with their Parents

My constructions of students varied if they were with their parents, emphasising the fluidity in their identities and how they were context-dependent, something which had to be acknowledged in the AimHigher initiative where there was tendency to construct young adults' identities with a greater degree of fixity. During Parents' Evening, pupils constructed and positioned themselves alongside their families, and less alongside their peers:

> ***Research Journal from Parents' Evening:*** *"Students here were very passive and quiet and didn't say very much compared with their parents. They didn't ask any questions themselves about the research and just usually stood quietly even when I*

mentioned that I had spoken to them about the research."

Pupils' behaviour was fluid and dynamic; they constructed themselves alongside and in opposition to other people present in this particular context, each construction of which contained different levels of power. Contrary to the Sixth Form Open Evening, students here were 'very passive and quiet', similar to how they constructed themselves when I visited their homes to interview their parents. At the Parents' Evening, pupils were discernibly less powerful than their parents and 'just usually stood quietly'. Such constructions were culturally located, framed within notions of 'respect' for elders (Ghuman and Dosanjh, 1997, 1998) and, more broadly, as a form of 'cultural respectability' (Skeggs, 1997, 2004). It would be considered culturally inappropriate for students to behave with parents as they did with peers, particular in public; young adults were positioning themselves through their familial habitus, within a culturally important context and their 'family' identity was paramount here. Furthermore, aspects of their 'beings' were demonstrated here; their behaviour was constricted by their habitus, defining what appropriate forms of action were available to them, thereby restricting agency.

4.2 CONSTRUCTIONS OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY BY YOUNG ADULTS

Young adults constructed different versions of masculinity and femininity which were, in part, constructed through their habitus, but also within the diaspora space; they positioned themselves alongside, and against, other young adults, highlighting how their identities, despite sharing points of reference, also differed from each other, varying according to context. Such identities were important for young adults' future aspirations as certain positions were more concerned with upholding a status amongst peers; academic work was not given precedence and future options could be constrained since teachers responsible for selecting students for AimHigher initiatives did not consider these identities as 'fitting in' with demonstrating the potential to enter HE as they would require these young adults to focus on academic work, an option that some identity constructions constrained. These identities could also be framed alongside cultural issues, particularly those concerning young females, which could compromise the 'izzat' of their families. Such issues were neglected in educational policy where there was a failure to acknowledge that different cultural nuances could be important for different groups, having an impact upon the resources they were able to draw upon.

4.21 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY: 'HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY' AND 'LADDISHNESS'

Notions of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘laddishness’ emerged from the data, usually from working-class young men when they constructed their identities highlighting how these particular forms of gender identity, which were largely absent from widening participation policy focusing on social class, were important to them and could be important for their future options. Hegemonic masculinity for these young men can be considered as a form of cultural capital; ‘performing’ hegemonic masculinity, in certain social and cultural contexts, usually with their peers, allowed them to gain ‘symbolic’ value which could be drawn upon as a sub-cultural resource. However, not all young men had the same level of capital; it could be accrued or lost, and varied according to how ‘authentic’ their performance was. In this way, it was possible to explore how they were positioned at different points within the diaspora space conveying how different forms of identity were not always compatible with academic achievement.

Ajeet displayed some aspects of Jackson’s (2002) ‘procrastination’ which I explored in the first chapter; although not outwardly disruptive, he left his work until the very last moment thereby masking any ability that he may have had:

> ***Ajeet (working-class male):*** *I wanted to like to become an engineer but I think, I, I, I don’t think I'm gonna get nearly decent mark in the GCSE and I can’t do it. Basically cos of, it’s actually due to cos I'm a bit lazy that's it.*

Ajeet attempted to present himself as honest as possible, acknowledging blame for his failure, giving his account more credence. Even though he aspired to be an engineer, he realised that it is 'cos I'm a bit lazy' that he 'can't do it'. From observing him in his tutor group, I noted in my field notes that he constantly used this time to quickly complete homework despite the realisation that this did hamper the options open to him. Through presenting himself as someone who did not 'care' about his work in class, he tried to perform a form of 'hegemonic' masculinity which could enable him to gain greater symbolic capital amongst peers. However, this was not successful - I observed that he was still marginalised in class by other young men and frequently derided by them, emphasising how Ajeet did not have the 'right' form of cultural capital to perform an 'authentic' version of hegemonic masculinity, positioning him weaker compared with other young men in the diaspora space, who were more successful in performing hegemonic masculinity. Attempting to perform such a version of masculinity also had an impact upon how Ajeet was positioned; such forms of masculinity not considered as demonstrating the potential to enter FE and HE by teachers. Consequently, as I explore in the following chapter, Ajeet was left in a state of uncertainty as to what he was able to do in the future, as many working-class male students were.

On the other hand, Permjeet fell between Jackson's (2002) second and third explanations of 'laddishness'. Through observations of Permjeet with his friends in the classroom, I noted he tried to encourage the idea that he did not study at all, rejected academic work, frequently sat disinterested at the

back of the classroom, and tried not to answer questions to ensure that he did not come across as a ‘nerd’. At the same time, realising the importance of Year 11, he would study at home and even had a home tutor to help him:

> ***Permjeet (working-class male):*** *Some teachers, the lessons that I talk a bit, and some lessons that I behave good, like in Maths my teacher thinks I'm good (yeah) and she's helping me out in Maths and that. Some subjects I just mess about in, like in Year 11 I've been trying more cos its time to get like serious and that (yeah), that's it.*

Compared with Ajeet who acknowledged blame for not performing well, Permjeet focused on how he only ‘talk[s] a bit’ highlighting how, rather than misbehaving continuously, it was kept to a minimum and he did not do so in lessons such as Maths where he had the chance of achieving a good grade. He did realise that it is ‘time to get like serious’, because it is such an important year and, as such, the rewards of being a ‘lad’, including the respect of peers, did not outweigh the potential costs for Permjeet. The social and cultural setting was important for demonstrating the fluidity in his masculinity. Permjeet could construct and ‘perform’ a ‘laddish’ identity at school, as long as it did not impinge upon his academic work, demonstrating the potential for HE; a form of behaviour which was seen as acceptable and encouraged within his peer group. However, at home he could study with his tutor, something that he was expected to do by parents. Such ‘performances’ of masculinity (Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2004) served to give him a form of cultural capital which was transferable to different contexts, and he appeared

to manage such a negotiation without much difficulty without a negative effect on Permjeet's academic work.

Negotiations of identity, based within social contexts and settings, were further developed when young men indulged in 'petty' forms of 'laddish' behaviour at school which, once again, could have negative implications for their future decisions through how they were likely to be constructed by teachers and within educational policy:

> ***Interviewer:*** *Have they uhh given you any more information in assembly?*
>
> ***Permjeet (working-class male):*** *Uhh, we had one two or three weeks ago (yeah) and (.) it was uhh, it was a whole day, we had half, half Year 11 had it one day, half Year 11 had other day and umm these two people like teaching us how to revise better and learn better (yeah). That's what they done all day.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *What did you think about that?*
>
> ***Permjeet:*** *Yeah that was quite fun cos they taught us to juggle as well (okay) and then we just went and throwing balls at each other.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Has the school provided you with any more information about careers?*
>
> ***Manjinder (working-class male)****: Yeah, I think, I dunno, I'm not sure, I don't think so. I, I come later*

every day you know to school. I get in about say nine, ten fifteen. Sometimes I'm late so I just bunk innit so…

Trying to remember careers information was cursory, at best, for both Manjinder and Permjeet; they were only able to recall scant details, such as the careers assembly being 'two or three weeks ago', and were not sure if the school had provided them with anything ('I'm not sure, I don't think so'). Far greater details were remembered about exercises which were not relevant to careers information, such as juggling, and levels of disruption that they caused ('we just went and throwing balls at each other'; 'sometimes I'm late so I just bunk innit'). The lack of importance of this information was stressed by these young men; enjoying themselves, based in the short-term, was far more important than planning in the long-term for their future education and career choices. Such findings have been found elsewhere on the working-class who are likely to place greater importance on more short-term goals (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000), and such forms of identity construction was not accounted for in AimHigher, where there was the assumption that providing young adults with information could lead to the construction of rational choices.

Furthermore, themes of the 'individual' versus the 'collective' were relevant here; whereas Permjeet would 'throw balls with his friends', Manjinder emphasised how he was to blame for low-levels of disruption ('I come later everyday'). However, after the interview, Manjinder mentioned that he would 'bunk' with other friends, including Ajeet, which was noted in the research

diary. This served as another self-worth protection strategy as outlined by Jackson (2002). Through these minor forms of disruption, the boys could enhance their status within the classroom, both individually, and especially amongst their peers. Such behaviour can therefore be seen as a form of cultural capital, transferred into symbolic capital and power amongst their peers, emphasising acceptable forms of behaviour, and marginalising others. As long as the disruption did not adversely impact upon other pupils in the classroom, the boys were allowed to continue. These forms of cultural capital contrasted with those required for academic success, where 'politeness' and 'hard work' were valued. However, negative constructions of young men by teachers did not have equal weighting; a hierarchy existed where those with more 'authentic performances' of masculinity were more likely to be constructed as not 'right' for AimHigher initiatives by teachers, as these young men lacked the potential and necessary skills in order to be successful in HE. Thus, Jaswinder's performances of hegemonic masculinity severely limited his future options.

Compared with other young men, Jaswinder was far more likely in his accounts to present himself as embodying 'hegemonic' masculinity. The disruptions he caused were frequently of a serious nature and he was suspended several times and threatened with exclusion. Such forms of masculinity were constructed by teachers as incompatible with the AimHigher programme and this had serious ramifications for what Jaswinder was able to do in the future, reducing his chances of future study and limiting his options. He gained status from "fighting, fucking (females) and football" (Mac an

Ghaill, 1994: 85), an alternative to the traditional three 'Rs' of education, and was habitually in trouble at school for a range of things including fighting, drinking and drugs:

> ***Jaswinder (working-class male): [Talking about the various times he's been suspended]*** *Third time, uhh we got caught smoking uhh gear [marijuana] (yeah), back of the school, like about ten of us and umm (.), basically you know what, I blatantly said to the teacher yeah, she goes "you know just tell us who brought the gear in", I go "Look I brought the gear in", and my mate was like he brought the rizzla in. They wouldn't believe me! They give it "you didn't bring the gear in" and they give it "tell us who brought it in", and I'm like, I'm sitting there saying "I swear on my mum's life I brought the stuff in" (yeah) and they wouldn't believe me, they didn't wanna back me up for some reason.*

Much like Ajeet earlier, there was an acceptance of blame in Jaswinder's extract. However, this acceptance was initially collective ('we got caught' and 'ten of us') rather than individual, highlighting how the group's deviant identity was paramount over his individual identity here, as well as the importance of the symbolic capital and power he acquired from his peer group as compared to what he could gain from academic work. There was a degree of nonchalance in Jaswinder's account where 'we got caught smoking gear' was seen as the 'norm' rather than an isolated incident and something which

enhanced his status amongst his peers. This was further added to with his disregard for authority; through positioning himself against the ethos of the school, he chose to protect his friends rather than 'grass them up' and showed incredulity and disappointment when teachers did not believe him ('They wouldn't believe me!'). Jaswinder employed 'stake confession' here (Potter, 1996) to acknowledge his interest in not 'grassing' his friends, a defensive rhetorical strategy where his 'owning up' and indignation at not being believed about bringing the drugs into school, could be seen as Jaswinder trying to further enhance his symbolic status amongst peers. There were other such instances where Jaswinder tried to enhance his status:

> ***Jaswinder: [recounting a fight that happened outside school]*** *I started laughing innit you know cos I ain't really scared of anyone I ain't got that fear in my heart and he gives it to me "You scared of me or summin'?", "No I ain't scared a you", so he pushes me. I thought alright safe. My reaction yeah would've ended up 40 mans having a fight (yeah). I thought I might as well do it innit so I pushed him back and so did Ricky with the knuckle-duster, it missed him by an inch otherwise he woulda had broken teeth by now and everyone just starts fighting and I get pulled out by my mates innit.*

Here, Jaswinder contrasted with his earlier account as he focused on the individual level immediately which was shown when 'I started laughing', 'I

ain't really scared' and 'I pushed him'. However, the relationship between the individual and the peer group is inextricably linked for Jaswinder and he further attempted to enhance his 'macho' status amongst his peers. Through both verbally showing fearlessness ('aint got that fear in my heart', 'No I aint scared a you'), and reiterated this through his actions ('I pushed him') even though he had the option not to fight, Jaswinder demonstrated how he considered his status amongst his peers, once again, to be paramount over everything else. The notion of 'stake' was important here – Jaswinder's actions resulted in a violent brawl involving a large group of young men and although he realised the consequences of his own actions, he considered it to be a necessary risk in order to enhance, and preserve, his status amongst his peers through 'performing' as a man should in that particular social and cultural context. Like other young men, his 'performances' served to give Jaswinder greater symbolic capital and power as he so visibly demonstrated the 'right' form of behaviour.

Despite AimHigher programmes focusing on those who had the potential to go to university, students like Jaswinder could miss being selected because of the identities they constructed; his position within his deviant peer group meant that he was placed in opposition to the ethos of the school, where studying was given more symbolic status. As such, because of the trouble he had been in, his future options were constrained as his expected grades in his GCSEs were low and the school had decided not to offer him a place in their Sixth Form. Consequently, Jaswinder's 'becoming' can be seen as very different to other young men in this sample; he was positioned differently in

the diaspora space, in a position of power when exploring his masculinity because he performed hegemonic forms, but, simultaneously, in a weaker position because of his lower academic status and his lack of future options. As I explore in the following chapter on aspirations, through these performances of masculinity, Jaswinder, like some other working-class young men, was left in a state of uncertainty as to what he was able to do after his GCSEs, findings found elsewhere (Gutman et al, 2011).

4.22 Strategies to Avoid Bullying

In previous research, young men who are positioned against hegemonic forms of masculinity and noticeably academic, have been found to be bullied in school (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). However, male students in this study all had a range of strategies to avoid and counteract bullying. Through my observations of the boys around school, I noticed that these boys did so by 'mucking' or 'messing about' in class thereby deflecting attention away from their academic effort and success. These findings were similar to those of Pollard (1987) who found some male students were more likely to be the 'jokers' in the classroom, introducing humour into lessons to disguise that they wanted to learn. The behaviour of these boys, although not disrupting lessons, was 'status-enhancing' (Adler and Adler, 1998), much like physical activities for boys constructed as 'hegemonic', enhancing such boys' status within the classroom.

Ravinder, a middle-class young man and one of the more academic students, had a unique form for deflecting attention from his academic work, his talent with magic:

> ***Ravinder (middle-class male):*** *You know what umm before I do magic like for white people, black people, they do look at me in a funny way but then when I start it, they're like shocked, amazed, they respect me so much it's unbelievable (mm). I've noticed it, I've done it to like you know friends of friends, relations you know, they're amazed after, respect me so much (mm) so that's what I like about it.*

Ravinder knew the impact that his talent could have; all types of people, both 'white' and black', when they saw him perform, were 'shocked, amazed' after they had initially looked at him 'in a funny way', the 'unsaid' here referring to his 'race' and 'ethnicity' and how they did not expect such behaviour from him. This averted attention away from his academic ability so that people now 'respect me so much'. His ability ensured that he was well-liked throughout the school, by both teachers and peers, and I frequently observed, and noted in my research diary, Ravinder performing his latest 'trick' before and after lessons for other students. Although Ravinder did not convey traditional forms of behaviour associated with hegemonic masculinity (his social class and performing magic perhaps more likely to be considered as 'effeminate' behaviour by other young men), his talent can be seen as a form of cultural capital which allowed Ravinder to be accepted in different social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, performing magic enhanced other forms of capital for Ravinder. It allowed him to gain social capital as he performed for everyone including 'friends of friends' and 'relations' which, in turn, augmented his symbolic capital, as people 'respect me so much', a form

of ‘respectability’ that Skeggs (1997, 2004) found in her research, and placed value on his performance. Increasing his symbolic and social capital thus allowed Ravinder to create a niche for himself where he could openly be academic in class, as well as be popular, without fear of bullying from boys occupying hegemonic positions of masculinity, highlighting how his ‘becoming’ was very different from other young men.

4.23 YOUNG MALE’S CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMALES

Masculinity was, at times, constructed and performed by these young men in opposition to females, and various and contrasting culturally located themes were evident in their accounts. Although some government literature on widening participation explored the importance of cultural constructions of gender (e.g. Cleaver et al, 2003), there was a lack of literature on the role of ‘izzat’ which could be an important consideration for the future choices of women, acting as a form of structure and explored further in the following chapter. Young men’s constructions of female roles also functioned in a similar way, prohibiting some future options for them, favouring others, highlighting how the habitus of these young men differed, as did their ‘becomings’.

Research on ‘laddishness’ has suggested that both working-class (Francis, 1999) and Muslim boys (Archer, 2003) are likely to be misogynistic. However, whilst this was present in these young men’s talk, they did show greater fluidity in their masculinity by having various constructions of females which contrasted with such research. Manjinder and Permjeet, although making

jokes, did construct women in terms of what they considered to be 'traditional' roles:

> ***Interviewer:*** *What would you be doing if you were a girl?*
>
> ***Manjinder (working-class male)****: Uhh, I dunno, fucking housewife, haha the best thing, I dunno.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Do you think there might have been any differences if you were a girl, would your parents have wanted the same things for you?*
>
> ***Permjeet (working-class male):*** *I don't even know. (.) Probably if I was a girl they'd want me to be more polite or something (haha) and that's about it, help out with housework or something.*

Although both young men used 'I dunno' to show that they had not given the idea much thought, both 'performed' a particular masculine identity and constructed the role of women pejoratively. The use of derogatory language in Manjinder's account, 'fucking housewife', was seen as the 'best thing' for women; the unsaid here being that women are not 'good' enough to do anything else. Permjeet, although constructing females as 'more polite', also presented them in terms of a 'traditional role'. This fitted in with the accounts of the two girls, Kiran and Simran (who I explore later) who discussed how certain members of their families considered these roles as the 'norm', a way of protecting the 'izzat' of the girl and family, and highlighting how female

identities were constructed and structured through the habitus, and positioned within the diaspora space.

Interesting here was my reaction to Permjeet's account. I laughed, 'haha', when he mentioned being 'more polite', but did not respond when he mentioned 'housework'; a reaction similar to Manjinder's account. Through using these defensive rhetorical strategies (Potter, 1996), I was able to construct a position where I could distance myself from comments which I considered sexist, constructing an identity in opposition to these young working-class men.

Jaswinder, on the other hand, chose to focus on a theme of respect for women from which he distinguished between culturally acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour:

> ***Jaswinder (working-class male):*** *Girls are just, it's just Indian thing you know you don't want your respect going down you know (yeah). Just say, just say uhh, a bloke for a fact yeah, he got bare [a lot of] respect yeah, he been known as the hardest man what not and lovable and everything yeah, then you find out his younger sister's a hoe (mm) you know summing like that. She's a slut, she gives this, she's dealing with his mate yeah. That is a bad reputation innit (mm), know what I mean. If I was in that position I'd rather kill myself rather than knowing that my*

sister's a hoe [whore] innit (yeah). I mean I know one person who's a, his sister's like one. His sister's even asked me for one, you know if I want any what not. I just turned 'round and laughed at her innit (yeah), I give it "your older brother yeah he's 19 what not, he's massive and he's my mate", I'm not exactly gonna do things behind his back now am I (yeah) and obviously I told him what she said to me innit and he goes "alright, safe, cheers for telling me" what not innit and he screwed [shouted] at his sister, since that day she ain't spoken to me.

Jaswinder constructed girls using a theme of respect which was located within a cultural framework based within his habitus ('it's just an Indian thing'), emphasising how his 'becoming', in this regard, was not so different from other young men. Instead of the focus being on the woman, however, 'izzat' for him was paramount in how a man's masculinity is constructed by others and is seen as having 'symbolic' value – 'respect' within the local community could be lost through the promiscuity of a young woman. Consequently, despite a man being the 'hardest' and having 'bare respect', his masculinity could diminish if his sister is a 'hoe' or 'slut', almost as if the brother was himself a cuckold. Jaswinder stressed how terrible it could be to have such a 'bad reputation' by stating how he would 'rather kill myself', and by giving the example of his friend, to give his version more credence. Just as with the other students, the unsaid in Jaswinder's utterances was interesting, the implication being that young women are not allowed access

to similar forms of sexual behaviour as young men; a promiscuous young women was a ‘slut’ whereas a male would be a ‘stud’. Moreover, there is the implication that he would have got together with the young woman in question if she had not been his friend’s sister (‘I’m not exactly gonna do things behind his back now am I’) and ‘massive’.

The repeated use of ‘innit’ in Jaswinder’s account, which was a statement presented as a question, showed how he tried to justify his actions, and reactions, to the girl’s advances, after which I usually used the markers ‘mm’ or ‘yeah’. Consequently, I was presenting myself as someone who agreed with his actions; who was reaffirming that I was an ‘insider’, who would have acted the same way, and someone that Jaswinder could confide in, a form of ‘footing’ (Potter, 1996).

Ajeet, alternatively, had a different habitus to Jaswinder, where he constructed females more positively and focused on the female members of his extended family, who had been particularly successful at school:

> ***Ajeet (working-class male):*** *I mean look, I mean like my other cousins and my mum’s cousin’s daughter, they uhh, they're doing pretty good, really good, but they went into private school innit (yeah) and they getting’ like you know, they doing uhh proper pharmical studies and they doing proper you know, they're gonna get their degrees and that's it. They're*

doing wicked [excellently] and us boys have done like jack [nothing].

Ajeet contrasted with the other young men and, despite being working-class, constructed girls positively rather than employing sexually objectifying or derogatory language; they were 'doing pretty good, really good' and, thus, had the potential to do well. Here, the collective versus the individual was also present in terms of his extended family to show how 'good' and 'proper' girls are doing compared with boys; even though they went to private schools, it is the girls who were studying for degrees compared with boys who had done 'jack'. Once again, rather than assigning blame for not doing well, Ajeet constructed himself, and young men in general, in pragmatic terms where they were to blame for their lack of success. The girls' academic success could increase the 'izzat' of the family, giving them greater 'respect', and therefore symbolic capital, in the local community. This contrasted with Jaswinder who argued that 'izzat' could be compromised, conveying how Ajeet's family habitus was different, and how his identity was taking on different routes compared with other young men.

In this section, the young men demonstrated different aspects of their masculinity, which were fluid and shifted according to the topic being discussed and could have an impact on their future options through acting as a form of structure; performance of hegemonic masculinity could limit the avenues open to these young men as they were constructed as possessing capitals which were incompatible with academic success by teachers. In addition, they constructed different and culturally positioned identities for

young females where the importance of ‘izzat’ was stressed, cultural nuances which were not fully explored in widening participation discourse and could act as a further source of structure for women. This also highlighted how these young men had different ‘becomings’ despite sharing similar ‘beings’.

Throughout these interviews, constructions of my own masculinity, both self-constructions and those by young adults, were also evident. My ‘middle-classness’ resulted in non-hegemonic forms of masculinity being constructed for me which had an impact upon how different young men responded and behaved. I did try to resist such constructions in order to gain an ‘insider’ identity through using vernacular language which was not always successful. However, during the pre- and post-interview conversations, I also tried to ingratiate myself with students through telling them various incidents, both humourous and violent, from when I was a pupil at the same school. Such forms of resistance were consciously performed in order to ‘fit in’ with different students, depending upon how they had constructed themselves, and were not always readily accepted by them as authentic since they were not ‘funny’ or ‘violent’ enough. Through such actions, I was stressing the fluidity of my own masculinity, shifting my identity according to the student I was interviewing, although not always successfully. As a result, I gained and lost symbolic capital and power throughout the interactions with these young adults.

4.24 Constructions of Sikh Femininity by Young Women

Although there were only two girls in sample, some constructions of the role of Sikh women were present in their accounts, which, although not generalisable to all Sikhs, just as with the accounts of the young men, are interesting to explore as they did, once again, highlight how government policy on widening participation simplified the future decision-making process; a failure to account for how cultural nuances could have a 'real' impact upon future choices.

In Chapter One, I discussed some research which had found 'traditional' gender roles to be advocated by Asian families, and certain options considered taboo (e.g. Thornley and Siann, 1991; Wade and Souter, 1992; Basit, 1997; Ghuman, 2001; Haw, 1994). The young women in this study, Kiran and Simran, constructed different versions of femininity as opposed to the young men who focused on issues of 'izzat' and 'traditional' gender roles within the family. These young women, demonstrating how their habitus was shifting, focused more on positioning themselves against these constructions and against boys, emphasising how they should have more agency. In this way, these girls were able to demonstrate how their identities may have shared points of similarity with the young men, but were also taking new and different routes, where the interplay of gender was a source of tension:

> ***Interviewer:*** *So what do you think of the way girls are treated in Indian culture?*
>
> ***Kiran (middle-class girl)****: Well uhh it's a bit rubbish really. Girls and boys are treated differently and it shouldn't be this way now, not here. I mean it's not*

India and we should be able to do what we want and we can.

***Interviewer**: How about how erm girls are seen [in Indian culture]?*

***Simran (working-class girl):** Uhh well it's not nice. It is different like how we are seen compared with boys who can do what they want. I've got cousins, my aunt's sons, who can do what they want, but for girls it's uhh much harder. I mean I should be able to do the same and I do – just have to make sure my parents don't find out!*

Both Kiran and Simran constructed a position in their extracts in order to take a stance against, and criticise, the cultural oppression of females. Kiran stressed how 'girls and boys are treated differently' and Simran gave examples from her own family to convey how boys 'can do what they want, but for girls it's much harder'. Both argued against the status quo, adamant that they should have greater agency. However, there was a realisation that expectations are something that can be challenged; the shift to this country ('it's not India) meant that there were greater opportunities for agency despite it still being difficult for girls. Kiran and Simran's habitus, changing from those of other members in the diaspora space, signified how their identities were in a state of flux, shifting from those that were culturally located, to newer forms where cultural nuances had less of an impact, highlighting how 'becomings'

located within new contexts created other possibilities and avenues for these young women.

Rather than complete agency, such newer forms of identity were culturally located, partly framed and structured by their parent's habitus, which varied from those of their daughters, and also with those of extended family members:

> ***Interviewer:*** *So do your parents have these ideas of how girls should behave?*
>
> ***Kiran:*** *No, I'm lucky like that, my parents are different. I mean I do have to do housework, cleaning and stuff which is ok, but my brother doesn't do it. But, uhh, I can go out with friends and stuff like that so that's good. My aunts and uncles are different though (yeah?). Yeh uhh they thing that I should sit at home, be a 'good girl'. I think that's what they want my cousins to do (yeah).*

> ***Interviewer:*** *What about your parents? Why do you make sure they don't find out?*
>
> ***Simran:*** *Haha that's because they'd kill me if they did (yeah)! If it was up to them, I'd stay at home after school, not go out, nuttin'. I tell them I'm at the library*

and cos they come late from work, I can go out. Just have to be careful innit.

Simran: *My aunt is different, she listens to me and supports me in what I do (mm). She knows what I wanna do in the future and thinks I should go for it. Like what's the point of school if you not gonna use it.*

Similar to Dale et al's research (2002) on Asian girls explored in Chapter One, there was little congruency in how 'izzat' was applied to these girls, and was context-specific (Sekhon and Szmigin, 2005). Thus, Kiran was 'lucky', since her parents allowed her more agency, permitting her to 'go out with friends' whereas Simran's parents would 'kill' her if they found out she has been out. These different constructions of female roles and subsequent appropriate behaviour were framed within the familial habitus of Kiran and Simran. Although Kiran's parent's allowed her greater independence, certain 'female' roles, which her brother did not have to do such as housework, still had to be completed. Her family's habitus had changed compared with her extended family who were 'different' and equated being a 'good girl' with staying at home. The 'unsaid' here was that girls who went out were 'bad', which could result in a family losing symbolic capital which they gained from 'izzat' being held, a form of 'respect' within the local community, something which Simran's parents also considered which is why she 'had to be careful' and form strategies of resistance, such as lying about going to the 'library'. Instead, it was Simran's Aunt who had a different habitus, which 'fitted in' with Simran's constructions of femininity, including her future educational and occupational aspirations. Important here was social class and the area of

origin. Kiran's parents were from East Africa and middle-class and, thus, had a different habitus compared with Simran's parents, working-class and from India.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, constructions of identity while being framed within the habitus were also located within the diaspora space. Members of the same group are positioned differently alongside each other, as well as other groups, in the same social space which is intersected by social class, gender and ethnicity amongst other factors. Both Kiran and Simran's families were positioned differently according to dimensions of social class and caste when constructing femininity compared with their extended families. Such positioning meant that although they may have shared some 'beings', they were in the process of constructing different 'becomings', where new and unique constructions were produced, with varying levels of agency and subsequent forms of behaviour, including girl's future aspirations, allowing certain things to be considered and prohibiting others, which I consider in detail in the following chapter.

Frequently, as Kiran mentioned above, girls were positioned against young men, meaning that constructions of femininity occurred against masculinity:

> ***Interviewer:*** *So how do guys behave?*
>
> ***Kiran:*** *(.) They're immature. All they care about is mucking around, messing about during lessons, it's really annoying when you trying to study. Uhh it's really important, uhh important time of year for us (yeah), the exams are coming up and we really have*

to concentrate if we wanna do well (yeah). Just makes things harder.

Interviewer: *Why do you think they muck about?*

Kiran: *Just to show off isn't it, always doing silly stuff.*

Simran: *Erm they always mucking around in class, think they being funny. it's uhh about erm being the toughest as well innit (yeah). I mean that's what they most concerned about which is a bit sad right now innit since we have to work hard (mm).*

Although Kiran and Simran constructed young men as more likely to 'muck about', 'mess about' and act 'immature' during lessons, they did also present different constructions. Kiran focused on how such forms of hegemonic masculinity, like disrupting the class, were not conducive with studying hard and achieving higher grades, making it 'annoying for her' as she has to 'concentrate' during this 'important time of year'. Such forms of behaviour therefore had an impact upon other members of the class, highlighting how these young men had greater power in this context over other students who wanted to work. For Simran, there was an element of competition to the behaviour of the young men for whom 'showing off' and 'being the toughest' took greater importance over other things, especially their academic work. These forms of masculinity, as explored earlier, functioned as a form of cultural capital for these young men amongst their peers, and, if performed correctly, could allow them to gain greater symbolic status and symbolic power which studying would not.

Through discussing young men's behaviour, these girls simultaneously constructed identities for themselves where they were positioned in opposition to the young men. Since these girls were not a part of the male group, they were not able to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' performances of hegemonic masculinity, and all forms of such misbehaviour were grouped together. Furthermore, both girls positioned themselves in opposition to the young men - Kiran constructed herself as being more concerned with her upcoming exams and Simran emphasised how such forms of hegemonic masculinity were 'a bit sad right now'. Through positioning themselves alongside the young men, both girls were demonstrating how they did not behave like them, and, subsequently, were not 'immature' and, through working hard, would be able to do well. As such, through constructing such identities which were more appropriate for academic work, despite these not always 'fitting in' with culturally located gender roles, Kiran and Simran were constructing themselves as demonstrating the potential to enter HE.

The gender identities of these students can be seen as taking on very different routes despite having some shared 'beings'. Students had different habitus which meant that certain identities gained greater importance in the school context, particularly amongst peers, where performing certain gendered identities could lead to greater power through the symbolic status they permitted students to acquire. Such identities could also be culturally positioned, where issues of 'izzat' could come to the fore, prohibiting certain

future decisions, and permitting others. This should have been a particularly important consideration for the AimHigher programme where the importance of cultural nuances for gender identities were not fully explored and which could have a significant impact on the future choices which were open to young people.

4.3 CONSTRUCTIONS OF BRITISH-SIKH IDENTITY

Part of the rationale of this study was to shed some light upon the construction of British-Sikh identities. Sikhs were focused upon since the term 'Asian' was theorised as being too broad and failing to account for the notable differences between various South Asian communities. However, although young adults' did stress how being a 'Sikh' was dynamic and fluid, 'Sikh' was also used, at times, interchangeably with 'Indian' and 'Asian', emphasising how identities were constructed at both the micro- and macro-level. Such terms, both broader forms of identification, were negotiated and employed effortlessly, without tension, highlighting the fluidity of their identities.

The cultural theories of Anthias (2002), Hall (1990) and Brah (1996) which I explore in Chapter Two were important here; identities certainly were not located within the binary of 'British-Sikh' (e.g. Drury, 1991; Hutnik, 1991), a definition infused with power, constructing young adults as British first and foremost, without due regard to the socio-cultural context. Instead, young adults adopted a 'translocational position' (Anthias, 2002), where there was a greater recognition of the different boundaries that one can be positioned against; their identities were a process of *being* and *becoming*, their shared histories were now in a state of flux, shifting and positioned against different axes (Hall, 1990). Thus, cultural differences, rather than being straightforward, are instead located and positioned against each other in particular power relationships alongside and against other groups (Brah, 1996).

Although I shared certain commonalities ('beings') with students, we were all 'becoming' in different ways, positioning each other differently across different axes of being 'Sikh', 'Indian' and 'Asian' within various social and cultural contexts. Such constructions were delineated by power, sustaining old inequalities, creating new ones, and intersected by gender and social class. In this regard, identities were far more dynamic than I had considered at the onset of the research and, indeed, more complex than in New Labour educational policies.

4.31 Students' Constructions of a 'Sikh'

Constructions of a 'Sikh' varied in students' accounts. Rather than this being based around notions of caste or social class, prevalent was student's physical appearance and whether they ascribed to the five physical characteristics of a Sikh. When asked questions about Sikhism and their education, some students saw Sikhism in terms of physical appearance, others in terms of attendance at the *Gurdwara* (Sikh temple):

> ***Interviewer****: Umm, do you think there's any advantages of being a Sikh and studying or anything like that?*
>
> ***Harjinder*** *(Sikh male with turban)****:*** *Advantages? The same as everyone else (mm) you just got long hair, worship a different god so (yeah). I mean over here people treat you the same as everyone else, equally (mm) so…*

Interviewer: *Do you think being a Sikh helps you to study or anything like that?*

Jaswinder (Sikh male who cuts hair): *Nah (.), well if you were that religious type and you were going to the Gurdwara [Sikh temple] and you, you know, stayed there a couple of hours a day what not then maybe you know you'd study more and everything innit, you'd get it into your brain innit (mm), you know you need to do study to get good grades innit and maybe you know God might help you if you go to the gurdwara everyday…I got into drugs, smoking, alcohol, what not and at the moment, you know safe, I believe in God just without you know believing that he helps out time, but not really, I don't really believe in him (yeah) cos I been through so much shit yeah and he's never been there innit (mm) know what I mean…it's just all cos of that you know, I don't believe in God basically.*

For Harjinder, Sikhism was associated with difference, both physical and religious, and constructed against other Sikhs, as well as those from different groups in the diaspora space. The 'long hair' was fundamental to being a 'Sikh' as was the 'worship' of a 'different god'. The unsaid, here, is that those who did not adhere to the physical symbols of Sikhism, such as myself, were not authentic Sikhs, whereas those with longer hair, such as himself, were

authentic; a far narrower definition of Sikhism than I employed for this study. Through such a fixed construction of the 'authentic' Sikh, Harjinder, advertently or inadvertently, constructed an 'outsider' identity for myself, one that I was powerless against; I could alter my behaviour, but not my physical appearance during interviews and, as a result, the symbolic capital and power I might have possessed through my academic status was reduced in this context.

Alternatively, Jaswinder considered Sikhism with more depth, constructing a different version, where there were two types of Sikhs with very different 'becomings'. Like Harjinder, there was a degree of fixity in this dichotomy: there were 'the religious type' that go to the 'Gurdwara' (temple) every day, and those into 'drugs, smoking and alcohol', like himself, positioning himself against the 'accepted' form of Sikhism. Sikhism, for him, contained a set of rules governing behaviour, enabling certain things and constraining others, and, consequently, those who attended the 'Gurdwara' learnt that 'you need to do study to get good grades'. Jaswinder, rather than simply accepting this version of Sikhism, after giving it consideration, challenged the status quo, 'I don't believe in God basically'. Compared with Harjinder, Jaswinder had a different 'becoming, constructing more of an 'insider' identity for myself through using culturally located words such as 'Gurdwara'; the assumption being that I understood what it meant. Such an identity may have been constructed, in part, because of my physical appearance; since both myself and Jaswinder were *sehajdari* Sikhs, we had physical characteristics in common.

Despite the obvious physical differences marking Harjinder as a Sikh and a visible ethnic minority, people were constructed as treating you 'equally' here. However, for other students, physical differences meant the likelihood of their physical differences being highlighted, conveying how they were positioned differently in the diaspora space and the multitudinous forms of Sikh identity:

> ***Amarpreet (Sikh male with turban):*** *When I went for work experience I don't really see that much of racism, I don't see racism (mm). Uhh (.) it really depends on what area you're in I mean if they're like over here than I think it's gonna be alright I feel (mm) but if it's something like America or something, like there's not a lot of Asians there, they don't know about Sikh culture I mean. Erm once I went to London and they were asking me "what is that [pointing at his turban], are you a lady?" and I was thinking what the! (yeah) So maybe there will be racism if I go somewhere where Asians are not known (mm), Singhs for example.*

Amarpreet's account emphasised how differences were augmented by a lack of knowledge about Sikhs which were linked to particular 'areas', showing how the diaspora space could differ according to country, having an impact on the forms of identity that were possible to construct. Thus, in 'something like America' where 'there's not a lot of Asians', 'Sikh culture' was not known about, and, consequently, there could be racism and very different forms of identity constructed. For Amarpreet, levels of symbolic capital associated

with being a Sikh could vary according to context; unfamiliar contexts could lead to a loss of symbolic capital. He developed this line of argument by giving the example of when he was in London and his long hair was equated with being a 'lady'; the physical differences in this context were a negative and challenged his masculinity, conveying the importance of defining and constructing forms of identity alongside other members in the diaspora space, as well as against those who were not Sikh. Constructions of identity were not neutral and power infused the process; Amarpreet was not able to resist this construction, accepting it without argument. Furthermore, Amarpreet's account also emphasised how he saw Sikhs as being a sub-group of 'Asians'; 'Sikhs' and 'Singhs' were placed under the broader category of 'Asians'; one could be either or all of these depending upon social, historical and cultural contexts, a definition that I, myself, agreed with through markers such as 'mm' and 'yeah'.

Constructions of a 'Sikh' therefore, in part, varied according to physical appearance. For those that ascribed to the physical symbols of Sikhism and wore all the 'Five K's', physical appearance was more important, which visibly marked them out as a minority group but could give these young Sikhs a greater level of symbolic capital. To others, such as myself, physical appearance was less important but there was acknowledgment of how 'broad' the category could be, incorporating *sehajdari* Sikhs. The diaspora space was important here in defining what it meant to be a Sikh. Constructions of Sikh identity was produced alongside, and against, other Sikhs, as well as other members of the diaspora space, highlighting how

although participants may have shared the same 'beings', their 'becomings' varied.

4.32 Blurring of Boundaries between 'Sikh', 'Indian' and 'Asian'

Despite Amarpreet's definition of Sikhism, the blurring of boundaries between 'Asian', 'Indian' and 'Sikh' was a prevailing theme in the young adult's accounts, conveying their identities were more fluid than I had originally theorised when deciding upon the aims and purposes of this study. Young adults frequently used all three categories, interchangeably at times, when they described themselves:

> ***Interviewer****: Do you think there's any advantages with being a Sikh with like studying and working as well?*
>
> ***Jaswinder (working-class male)****: Well (.), I dunno if you go into a Indian shop you know, down High Street or summin' jus so you, (.) any shop you know and basically the manager's Indian yeah. You could be related to him in any way you never no innit (yeah) you know what Indians are like innit these days? If you go down to a shop and you say yeah, it's like when I you know wanna work for them, its nuttin' to do with you're Indian or anything it's just basically they look at your record and they look at the way you are and then they decide from that innit (mm). They*

don't say "oh he's Indian, we'll have him working for us". (.) That's basically what it's like innit.

Interviewer: *What about with you being a Sikh, do you think there's any jobs that you might not be able to do?*

Simran (working-class female): *Umm (.), I don't know, theatres cos you know loads of Indian people don't go into theatres and that's what my mum is always telling me she goes it doesn't seem good for a Indian family to be put in, you know all Indian families are so different (mm) and no one goes into theatres or movies or anything or stuff like that so my mum just definitely she goes "There's no way you're gonna go into that" but I'm still gonna do it and I know she won't like it. But, it's something different so why can't somebody Indian do it just because you know all the families are like, you know all the Indian people don't do that. You know what I mean innit ?(yeah), like that.*

Despite both students being asked questions about Sikhs, their answers instead focused on 'Indians', referring to how they considered their extended social networks to be 'Indian' rather than 'Sikh', and, once again, how members of the diaspora space were important in such constructions. Jaswinder, thus, saw potential future occupations being defined by potential future managers who would also construct Jaswinder as 'Indian'. Similarly,

Simran focused on ‘Indian people’ rather than Sikhs when she discussed the theatre; it is ‘Indian families’ that prevented people from entering different professions. They resisted my constructions of them as ‘Sikh’ and shifted effortlessly from ‘Sikh’ to ‘Indian’ according to context, conveying the fluidity in their identities, without any tension in this negotiation.

It was interesting how both students were working-class and how they related their fluid identities to occupations. Considering their identities in broader terms, rather than defining them more narrowly, resulted in Simran and Jaswinder increasing their social capital and networks, which linked in with other research on Sikhs. Ballard (1987), through exploring the family relationships of Jalandhar (region in Eastern Punjab, India) Sikhs and Mirpuri (region in Pakistan) Muslims, found varying practices. These Muslims were more likely to solidify existing social networks through marrying within their own communities, whereas these Sikhs were more likely to marry outside their kin groups in order to extend their social networks. Although Ballard’s research focused on marriage practices, it can be seen as relevant here; through defining themselves as broadly as possible, Jaswinder and Simran sought to identify themselves with others who, with similar ‘beings’, shared historical and cultural trajectories, showing how this was important for them when constructing identities in contemporary society.

Furthermore, both students constructed an ‘Indian’ identity for myself during their extracts by asking questions, with ‘you know’ being consistently repeated. Thus, Jaswinder stated ‘you know what Indians are like innit these

days?' and Simran asked 'you know what I mean innit? (yeah)'. Despite considering myself as a 'Sikh' at the onset of the research, this showed that I had not considered my own identity fully: these young adults saw my identity in broader terms, possibly because I did not wear all the physical symbols of Sikhism, to define me as 'Indian'. Rather than resist their constructions, I demonstrated how my identity was also fluid rather than fixed, as I agreed with them ('yeah'), emphasising how I was also taking on a similar 'becoming' to them and, consequently, the blurring of my identity, between 'Asian', 'Indian' and 'Sikh', was not confined to young adult's constructions, I also constructed myself in such a way.

The final question in every interview with parents, teachers and young adults concerned high aspirations of Asian parents:

> ***Interviewer:*** *Alright then. Finally there's this stereotypical view of Asian parents that they all like have high aspirations of their children whether or not their children can achieve it or not. I just want some of your uhh opinions on that.*

Despite focusing on Sikhs, since I considered certain notable differences existing between various South Asian groups, through using the term 'Asian' I was showing how I considered the construction of unrealistically high aspirations as a phenomenon apparent in all the various Asian communities. However, the rationale behind why such a question was decided upon and employed was more complex. The question was decided upon through discussions with my initial PhD supervisors, stressing how it was a

stereotype prevalent in wider society and not exclusively for Sikhs. As such, we were co-constructing a fluid identity for myself; I was not just Sikh, I was also Asian, stressing the 'becoming' in my own identity which varied according to different contexts. These identities were not just constructed by myself and young adults, but were also common when I interviewed Sikh parents.

4.33 The Role of Caste in Subject-Positions for Young Adults

Caste was also important when participants constructed subject-positions and notions of symbolic capital were evident here, as was the diaspora space in defining both the 'beings' of participants, as well as the new avenues of possibility they created. Interestingly, when considering configurations of caste, young adults did not position themselves, or myself, through the caste system, and I had to introduce the topic at a juncture in interviews. These accounts 'fitted in' with Brah (1996), who argued that configurations of caste have developed and adapter to a different context in Britain:

> ***Interviewer:*** *How about caste? Do you think that is important?*
>
> ***Harjinder: (Umm)*** *No, not here. It's not something that is so important really is it? (No, not really). I mean we never think about it really umm (.) maybe more for our parents and the older ones.*
>
> ***Interviewer****: And do you erm think caste is important?*

> ***Ravinder:*** *Nope, not at all. I mean everyone here is equal isn't it? (Uhh yeah) So it's not really important if someone is higher or lower to you (Yeah). I mean it doesn't really help you does it? (No).*

Both Harjinder and Ravinder saw caste as something which was 'not really important' in this socio-cultural environment, and both stressed 'here' to convey this, signifying a shift in their habitus from those of their parents, meaning that new forms of 'becoming' could be created which were influenced by other members in the diaspora space. However, both students considered different things when exploring the role of caste and, in doing so, constructed an 'insider' identity for myself through asking questions. For Harjinder, an inter-generational distinction was presented between the younger and older generation, 'we never think about it' compared with 'parents and older ones'. Here, he asked my opinion, and, as I answered in the affirmative, he constructed me also as someone for whom caste was not important. Alternatively, Ravinder constructed caste as something which placed people within distinct social and cultural categories where 'someone is higher or lower to you'; something which was 'not really important' for him, but varied according to context. Once again, like Harjinder, he asked me a question, 'I mean everyone here is equal isn't it?' stressing how he considered the caste system as especially not important in the social and cultural context in Britain, since in this diaspora space, 'everyone was equal' and how being a particular caste is of no use, symbolic or otherwise, here. Through asking me the two questions, to which I agreed, he constructed me as someone who shared a similar 'becoming' and is of the same generation,

which I affirmed rather than contested. In this way, all three of us were constructing the caste system as not having any symbolic value within society for the younger generation(s) compared with the older generation, which is explored in greater detail in the next section.

4.4 CONSTRUCTIONS BY PARENTS

4.41 CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE 'TRADITIONAL' VERSUS THE 'MODERN' PARENT

There has been a tendency in some research I explored in Chapter One to construct parents as homogeneous (e.g. Basit, 1996; Bhatti, 1999). It was important to reiterate that these British-Sikh parents were not a homogeneous group; the range of subject positions constructed by parents during the course of this study emphasised their heterogeneity and highlighted the need for a greater understanding of these parents in order to fully foster partnerships between them and teachers as part of widening participation initiatives. A range of linguistic strategies were employed by them in order to construct and present themselves, each of which was inscribed with power. Such subject-positions, although prodigious, were predominantly constructed alongside the theme of the 'traditional versus the modern', inherent within which were notions of a British-Sikh identity for their children and the amount of knowledge they possessed about the British educational system, fitting in with findings by Dosanjh and Ghuman (1997), who found such distinctions varied between first- and second-generation parents. The 'becomings' of parents were emphasised here; although they might have shared similar 'beings', with similar origins, their 'becomings' were very different, intersected by social class and gender, positioned at different points within the diaspora space, and allowing some newer forms of action, as well as reproducing some older forms. Constructions of parents' identity could be important for their children's future aspirations, having an impact upon the resources that they were able to employ, including their

social networks, as well as upon the types of choices they allowed their children to consider. Moreover, exploring parent's identities also allowed an exploration of the impact of cultural factors and how they could act as a form of structure on their children's aspirations, particularly those that were based on gender.

Both Ravinder's and Kiran's mothers were adamant that their children should have the agency to enter their professions of choice, that of magic and law:

> ***Ravinder's Mother (middle-class, from East Africa):*** *Magic or umm entertainment was not thought of as a good career before, it's different for them [young adults] now and uhh more opportunities are there and that's why (.) we want to support him as much as possible. Some people still think this way and that we are silly for doing this but you have to move with the times. It is what Ravinder really wants to do and we have to help him.*
>
> ***Kiran's Mother (middle-class, from East Africa):*** *It's a different time now isn't it? (mm) We can't just think that a girl will sit at home and look after the house. (.) Some people in our family want this and me and my husband don't agree with them. They are quite close-minded. Erm (.) Kiran is bright and can do well so we want to push her.*

Both mothers constructed their identities in direct opposition to an ‘other’, in this case, their relatives. For Ravinder’s mother, it was ‘some people’ that continued to think that entertainment was not a ‘good career’ despite there being ‘more opportunities’ now. Despite being constructed herself as ‘silly’, both parents tried to support their son as ‘much as possible’ and ‘have to help him’, seeing it as necessary rather than a choice. In this way, Ravinder’s mother presents positive ‘face’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987), where she seeks approval from constructing herself in opposition to other parents, who were more ‘traditional’ compared with the ‘progressiveness’ and ‘liberalness’ that Ravinder’s parents showed.

Similarly, Kiran’s mother also constructed herself in opposition to other parents who were ‘close-minded’. However, here the construction was based upon ‘traditional’ notions of gender where a ‘girl will sit at home and look after the house’. Positioning herself against these ‘others’ resulted in Kiran’s mother constructing herself as more ‘modern’ and ‘less traditional’ compared with others who were presented as more ‘traditional’. Allowing Kiran agency to accomplish what she wants was justified since she was ‘bright’, meaning that her parents had a responsibility to ‘push her’. Constructing themselves as ‘modern’ allowed these parents more symbolic power – through supporting their children they marginalised other forms of behaviour, namely against gendered forms of behaviour. These constructions were framed in terms of opportunities available now in the UK as stressed by both these mothers. As such, ‘you have to move with the times’ and ‘it’s a different time now’ highlighted a shift in their habitus, allowing greater fluidity for

'becomings' to be constructed in the diaspora space, which opened up new forms of thought and behaviour.

Thus, identities of parents had an impact upon how they interacted with the education system, and this was partly based on their migration patterns and their social class. The heterogeneity of these parents, arguing against some traditional stereotypes of Asian parents, highlighted the need for a greater exploration and understanding of these parents in the AimHigher programme. Although some parents did construct themselves in more 'traditional' terms and isolate themselves from the school, these 'modern' parents were more likely to attend school events and there were greater opportunities to nurture relationships with teachers. These parents used their resources, including their social networks, more readily in order to help their children with their future aspirations and careers, for both organising work experience and as a source of advice which I explore in greater detail in the proceeding chapter.

Alternatively, other parents used different 'face-saving' strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987, Gee, 1999) in order to present themselves as having tried to help their children, showing different 'becomings' from the other parents:

> ***Simran's Father (working-class, from India)****: I tried to help her with her decisions but uhh there is no point. She doesn't listen, just wants to (.) muck about. Doesn't think about her studies at all. Uhh I've offered her advice, tried to show her what is good and not. I give up!*

***Manjinder's Mother (working-class, from India)**:*

He just doesn't work! His father doesn't care but I do so erm try to get him to see what he will miss out on, told him about how hard I work (.) does no good.

These parents contrasted with Ravinder and Kiran's mothers and social class and migration patterns were important. Both parents here blamed and placed the onus on their children for not studying; they had both 'tried' whereas Simran 'doesn't listen' and 'just wants to muck about' and Manjinder 'just doesn't work' thereby constructing both young adults as being more concerned with short-term interests rather than thinking about more important long-term plans. Despite this, Simran's father 'tried to help her' and Manjinder's mother has tried 'to get him to see what he will miss out on' by not studying hard, thereby highlighting how the parents have tried their best, offering advice from experience; a position of power. Consequently, Simran's father presented himself as a source for information as he had been 'offering her advice', and Manjinder's mother recounted her own 'hard' work to explain why their children should listen to them and study harder. Since both parents had tried their all, they justified why there 'is no point' and they could 'give up'. Rather than constructing themselves as 'traditional', and forcing their children into certain pathways, they tried to present a different version of a 'modern' parent who had tried, but it was their children who had not taken their 'good advice' on board. Through attempting to save 'face', these parents showed a different 'becoming' to other parents and attempted to retain symbolic capital in the local community, the loss of which could have had an impact upon their social networks. This was of greater importance than trying

to use their ‘grapevine’ in order to gain information, both for themselves and their children.

There were clear distinctions between working-class and middle-class parents and the constructions they created for themselves and their children which also served to indicate the positioning of these parents within the diaspora space and their different ‘becomings’. Middle-class parents, who had more knowledge about the education system and had migrated from East Africa, were more likely to construct an identity where they positioned themselves against an ‘other’, more ‘traditional’ parents, a strategy to increase symbolic capital. However, working-class parents were more likely to position themselves against their children, who were to ‘blame’ for not doing well and not drawing upon their parents’ knowledge as a resource, a technique to protect their position within the community. These parents had different habitus, which meant that different forms of identity construction were permissible, having an impact on the forms of resources they were able to employ for their children; middle-class parents, who constructed themselves as more ‘modern’, were willing to, and able to, invest more of their resources in their children’s education, including from their social networks, regardless of gender. The exception here was Amarpreet’s parents who, despite being middle-class, had a lack of knowledge about the education system because of their relatively recent migration from India and had to rely on relatives for advice. Once again, rather than social class being all important, parental resources were interlinked with, and intersected, other factors such as gender, ethnicity and cultural issues, thereby stressing the

complexity involved in their roles, as compared with widening participation policies, which oversimplified their input.

Parents' subject-positions were also inscribed with other forms of power during the course of interviews where they presented themselves as more, and less, powerful than other parents and teachers:

> ***Interviewer:*** *So how much did your parents come into contact with teachers in India?*
>
> ***Jaswinder's Father (working-class):*** *Erm (.) over in India not much because the uhh teacher is uhh is in control and knows what to do. If the child is doing badly, like of the mucking about, then erm parents are told, that's it. Here it's very different and we get letters nearly every week from teachers with information, with events (.). We uhh don't go normally cos uhh it's hard to find time always with work but we try. Basically erm unless there is a some problem, like now he has been getting into fighting you know (mm), teachers know best so we let them deal with it at school.*

> ***Permjeet's Mother (working-class) [translated from Punjabi]:*** *It is uhh hard for us because our English is not very good and because of this we can't always follow what the teacher says so with Parents'*

Evening we sometimes take his aunt who then can tell us what the teacher is saying. He [Permjeet] could just say anything to us and we wouldn't know, isn't it? (mm). It happened with my friend's son and she didn't know anything until he failed. We want him to do well and we can't help him unless we properly know how he is doing.

The different social and cultural positioning of parents in the diaspora space, alongside and against other parents as well as teachers, had an impact upon the levels of power they had at their disposal. Working-class parents, like Jaswinder's father and Permjeet's mother, were positioned as weaker due to their lack of English and education. This lack of the 'right' form of cultural capital meant that they were constructed against the middle-class ideal advocated in the AimHigher programme (Archer and Yamashita, 2003), and it was harder for them to help their children, relying far more on teachers. Here, as I explored in Chapter One, cultural factors, located within notions of 'respect' for the teacher in India (Bhatti, 1999), were given as an explanation for why Asian parents have low rates of school participation which were not accounted for in widening participation initiatives.

Relationships between parents and teachers, in both India and Britain, were constructed as being infused with power by Jaswinder's father; it is teachers in India who were in 'control' and those in Britain 'know best', whereas parents were presented as having little knowledge about what their children did. However, he made a clear distinction between these teachers based

upon the informal contact they had with parents. Teachers in India only informed parents when their child was ‘doing badly’, including misbehaving, while teachers here provided parents with as much information as possible and so they ‘get letters nearly every week from teachers’. Despite this, Jaswinder’s parents, rather than shifting boundaries between teacher and parent, were content with the status quo of the relationship and thus, they ‘don’t go normally’ to events organised. Such a stance was justified since it was ‘hard to find time’ with work and ‘teachers know best’, constructing them as ‘experts’. As such, a ‘traditional’ and rigid role of parents was constructed, located within their own experiences of the education system in India, one that they were not adverse to.

Permjeet’s mother presented a range of complex, shifting power relationships during her account, with language, and language use, coming to the fore. She began by presenting both parents as linguistically weak because of their lack of English. Therefore, ‘it is hard for us’ which resulted in ‘we can’t always follow what the teacher says’, thereby also positioning themselves as weaker to teachers. Furthermore, they are presented as linguistically weaker than, and dependent upon, relatives who are constructed with greater linguistic power and, thus, were a valuable resource for communicating with teachers. Despite the lack of English, Permjeet’s mother constructed herself as more powerful than her friend who ‘didn’t know anything [about her son] until he failed’. Consequently, even though Permjeet’s mother was less powerful than other relatives and teachers, she tried to find alternative methods to help her son, and issues of language were not a barrier for her.

Additionally, there was an intricate relationship between myself, in my researcher role, and the mother, during this account and the course of this interview. During the pre- and post-interview conversations with Permjeet's mother, which I noted in the research diary, we discussed different facets of my biography, including the region of Punjab I was from, and my family and educational background. This had an impact on the interview as it was intersected by language, caste, social class, gender and age all of which were inscribed with different forms of power. I was of a higher caste than Permjeet's mother, *Jatt* (farmer) compared with her *Ramgharia* (trader) caste, male, middle-class and younger. Ghuman and Dosanjh (1997; 1998) have found the notion of 'respect' for their elders as very important in Asian communities. Furthermore, I was constructed as more powerful because I was the 'expert' in the subject, had control over the interview and was the one procuring knowledge and information through asking questions and directing the course of the interview.

Bourdieu's (1989) notion of symbolic power was important again here and he points out how such power can be made more 'real' through recognition by members of a group. Although I did have certain 'recognition', through my academic status, it was unclear how I could have 'sufficient recognition' to enforce my power over Permjeet's mother in order to construct the world through how I was interpreting her 'talk'. In addition, not all of the subject-positions constructed were as important for me as for the mother. In particular, caste was not something I considered but, as I explore later, could

be important for some parents, highlighting fluidity in identity construction and how 'becomings' varied although we shared some points of reference.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power was also employed, and important, when exploring the power relationship between myself and participants and, although he focused on how such symbolic power can be employed in symbolic violence by different social classes to serve their own interests, it is still useful at the individual level. As I explore with regards to my own role within the research later in this chapter, the symbolic power I possessed as the 'expert' in the field gave my position legitimacy throughout the research, highlighting how my habitus was different, and how I was located differently in the diaspora space, from participants.

However, Bourdieu is not clear on the conditions for how such symbolic power can be granted since members of a group will not act in a homogeneous manner and, rather than acquiring or losing such power, it fluctuated during the course of the interview depending upon the topic being discussed. For example, during this interchange with Permjeet's mother, language was especially significant; I was linguistically powerful as it was I who was responsible for translating her interview from Punjabi into English, which involved deciding upon the exact words to use in the translation. This interview was *my construction* of Permjeet's mother's constructions; all of which could infer different meanings and, thereby, different constructions. However, simultaneously, I was also linguistically weaker to Permjeet's mother as we conducted the interview in Punjabi; although fluent in Punjabi,

my vocabulary is not extensive and my dialect betrays my identity. I noted in the research diary that I did use the wrong tenses and gender of words at times, was hesitant when thinking of what I was to say next, and, during pre- and post-interview conversations, Permjeet's mother had to correct me a few times. As such, this was significant as I was positioned as linguistically weaker throughout the duration of the interview since it was conducted entirely in Punjabi. Since we were discussing a topic in which I was considered an expert, I was still able to retain my status. However, the lack of linguistic skills, and that I was younger, did result in me not maintaining as much symbolic power as I may have done otherwise and showed how, in certain contexts, individuals' 'becomings' could position them in weaker positions.

Thus, the level of symbolic capital and power I had varied during the course of the interview with Permjeet's mother, rather than these powers being something I solely possessed and used. Each subject-position was fluid, inscribed with different accesses to power, coming to the fore during certain parts of the interview, and withdrawing during others. On occasions, more than one position was held simultaneously; these positions were not fixed but changed according to the topic being discussed and the forms of identity constructed. Consequently, power relations fluctuated within, and during, the interview, intersecting and interweaving the positions adopted, highlighting how we were located at different points in the diaspora space.

4.42 CONSTRUCTIONS OF CASTE BY PARENTS

The caste system was also mentioned by many parents when discussing themselves and other parents. However, compared with young adults, parents saw caste as something which was more important and they were more likely to introduce the topic themselves, signifying how their habitus was different from that of their children:

> ***Interviewer****: So what about caste, do you think that can be important?*
>
> ***Simran's Father (from India)****: Well (.) of course it is. I mean we are Chumar (lowest caste) which means erm that we should not, can't marry with others higher than us. It's just (.) how erm we are.*
>
> ***Interviewer****: How about caste? Is that important at all?*
>
> ***Amarpreet's Father (from India)****: Not for education. Here, can do what you want. But (.) erm when thinking of marriage, it is very important. I would not umm want my son marrying someone lower than us, who is different erm it would not look good if he didn't.*

Compared with the younger adults, there were distinct cultural issues with how parents considered the role of caste. Both parents considered notions of caste as a concern for marriage, although it did not have a bearing upon their children's education as 'Here, can do what you want' thereby highlighting the importance of social and cultural context on the dynamics of caste. Instead,

caste was seen as something deterministic when considering marriage, inhibiting potential partners for their children and, as a result, young adults could not marry 'higher' or 'lower' than them. In this way, caste had a symbolic value for parents since marriage outside caste 'would not look good' and there could be a loss of 'respect' and symbolic capital, findings discussed in Chapter One (Afshar, 1994). Such constructions of caste contrasted with young adults who did not consider their future marriage partners when discussing caste.

Furthermore, parents' constructions of caste did not vary according to social class, but instead were delineated according to the parents' area of origin; those from India were more likely to see caste as a greater resource which had symbolic capital than those from East Africa:

> ***Interviewer****: Do you think caste is important for future decisions?*
>
> ***Jagjit's Mother (from East Africa)****: Erm not really for education or jobs, everyone has a chance to do what they want here. (.) Erm, maybe other areas caste is still important (yeah?) yeah like marriage mainly, some people think you have to marry with your own caste. We're not really thinking about that, when he is ready he can choose who he wants as long as she's educated.*

Jagjit's mother took a similar approach to Simran and Amarpreet's fathers, as she did not consider caste as having a role to play in this country and stressed how it was more meritocratic as 'everyone has a chance to do what

they want here'. Despite stressing the importance of caste for marriage, she positioned herself and her husband as against these people as 'we're not really thinking about that'; here, the unsaid remains that other families are more 'traditional', whereas Jagjit's parents are more 'modern' as he is free to 'choose who he wants'. Her extract conveyed how her identity was shifting into newer forms where her 'becoming' was transforming and adapting to different contexts, and, accordingly, the impact of cultural nuances would not remain fixed. This was further reinforced as Jagjit's mother ideally would prefer a girl who is educated, gaining symbolic value from this rather than from the caste of the girl. Before migration to the UK, these parents had been positioned in an alternative diaspora space, located away from India in East Africa where such barriers had greater precedence in identity construction, and, therefore, they shared similar positions to their children as to the function and importance of caste.

In this section, I have demonstrated how different parents used different strategies to present themselves during interviews. Parents positioned themselves against the 'other', whether that was other parents, or their own children, in order to construct themselves positively. Positioning here was not confined to parents alone, but also had an impact upon how I was constructed during interviews. At times, this could be intricate, constructed along various axes, such as caste and gender, each inscribed with varying and overlaying forms of power, which could increase and reduce symbolic capital and conveyed the fluidity in 'becomings' and different positioning within the diaspora space. Such ideas were especially important for

highlighting the heterogeneity of these parents; their social class infused alongside caste, gender, and cultural concerns emphasized how they could behave in very different ways, including whether they participated at school events. This heterogeneity was not fully acknowledged in the AimHigher programme and there was a lack of awareness of nuances of culture and, consequently, this lack of understanding had a negative impact upon fostering parent/teacher relationships and on increasing parents' school participation.

4.5 TEACHERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF THEIR ROLES

4.51 CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE TEACHER: 'EXPERT'?

In this final section, I explore teacher's constructions during their interviews. As part of the AimHigher scheme, the teacher, through updating their skillset, was constructed as 'expert', able to offer advice and information concerning future aspirations to parents and young adults. The constructions of teachers in this study were interesting, varying from constructing themselves as the 'expert' with knowledge which they readily administered to parents, to those where they presented themselves as 'helpless' before the forthcoming changes in the education system with the introduction of Connexions, ambiguous as to what their roles entailed.

Mr Peter's account expounded the presentation of the teacher as 'expert', someone who had the specialist knowledge that parents required:

> ***Interviewer****: Umm, generally speaking, what do you think parents think of the advice you give them?*
>
> ***Mr Peters [one of the Heads of Year]:*** *Umm, some, some parents are, well I'd say most parents are, are generally supportive, generally you know they accept the advice, they'll go away and talk to their kids about it and will both think it over and maybe come back with few more questions. Umm, I don't, I've never ever had any sort of negative feedback from anyone, some, some parents will listen to the advice and then they uhh really want them, their child to do something else or you know, they want to move them in a different direction so*

will tend to kind of listen to the advice and then if its not really achieving what they want, they will generally ignore it (mm) but that's (.), 1 % of probably parents that I've spoken to (yeah). They generally, they generally accept that our advice is sound advice as people that, that have you know knowledge (mm) umm (.), but some, some will actually go and seek some other guidance elsewhere, maybe a friend of the family that's also in education or umm careers or something like that so they tend to get, you know some parents will get more than one source of advice (mm), I say generally most parents will take our advice and umm not really question it, I've never been questioned on the advice I've given so far (yeah), to date, so you know, they do generally accept it (mm) because we have a lot of data, we have a lot of evidence.

Mr Peters used several markers in this extract to justify giving advice to parents and continuing to do so in the future. He fostered relationships with parents, who were constructed as 'supportive'; they 'listen' and 'accept' the 'sound' advice that he offered them without 'questioning it' or by giving him 'negative feedback' and so only '1%' of parents have ignored his advice. Consequently, Mr Peters constructed parents as a homogenous group, much like government policy, without distinguishing between middle-class and working-class parents, nor accounting for the importance of cultural differences. Thus, 'they' 'need' and 'want' his advice and actively approached him for it. Alternatively, he positioned himself in opposition to them,

constructing himself as an ‘expert’ with the necessary knowledge, thereby creating a succinct power relationship between parents and himself, rather than one where there was greater equality. Although Mr Peters did acknowledge that parents are able to draw upon other resources, such as social or cultural capital (i.e. other members of their family or the careers service), for information, he positioned this after his own advice, showing how ‘valuable’ this is. Accordingly, acquiring information from other sources was seen as supplementing the advice and guidance he had offered, rather than supplanting it. Here, just as with my role, notions of the ‘expert’ were important. Mr Peters’ knowledge was given precedence over parents and he had the final say in what was ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. Additionally, Bourdieu’s (1989) notion of symbolic power was relevant; Mr Peters’ knowledge and ‘middle-classness’ gave him symbolic capital, which he was able to transfer into symbolic power through giving advice to parents, a role that elevated his status.

Furthermore, in his account, Mr Peters constructed the role of the teacher based on personal, as well as collective, instances. He began by giving examples situated explicitly in his own experiences with parents, using pronouns such as ‘I've never been questioned on the advice I've given so far’. Towards the end of the extract, Mr Peters used positive ‘face’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987), a rhetorical device to situate the advice given in terms of teachers as a whole and, therefore, ‘we now have a lot of data’. Through emphasising ‘we’, he constructed solidarity between all teachers; they

'possess' the requisite knowledge to help parents and students with future decisions and they have 'data', or 'facts', to justify this position.

Such a position contrasted with that of the other Head of Year; Mrs Richards questioned the knowledge and information that teachers had about future options, making a succinct distinction between newer teachers, such as Mr Peters, and those that had been in the profession for a longer period of time, like herself:

> ***Mrs Richards*** *– For, for a lot of teachers, depends on the age that they are, but we do seem to be a very aging profession, very few young ones coming in (mm) and we get a knowledge of the new courses that we're running, like the GNVQs and those sorts of things, but we have old knowledge as to what subjects you need to do particular careers so we, we really need to be boosted into the 21st Century (yeah) with what's on offer, what's available so that we, we're as up-to-date as we can possibly be.*

Mrs Richards account linked in with research I explored in the first chapter. A lack of training concerning future routes and HE (e.g. Morris et al, 2004) was a hindrance for her. She positioned herself in terms of broader, national concerns within the education system. Thus, teaching was 'a very aging profession' and although they were provided with knowledge of 'new courses', 'we have old knowledge' about subjects. Through positioning herself with the 'old', Mrs Richards constructed herself in opposition to Mr Peters and AimHigher; he was the 'expert', with elevated status amongst

parents, yet she needed to 'be boosted into the 21st Century', improve her knowledge base and thereby constructing herself as weaker to Mr Peters in terms of the knowledge and information they were able to offer parents and young adults. Through constructing herself against such national debates, she presented herself as someone who wanted to be as proficient at her job as possible and, consequently, she wanted to be 'as up-to-date as we can possibly be'.

Before, during and after interviews, teachers' constructed me in a particular way. I was presented as a former student at the school, 'expert' in the subject, and confidante for discussing students; all constructions that I found difficult to adopt, although I did not actively resist, since I found it difficult to consider myself in such terms, as I felt that I did not fit in with any such construction:

> ***Mrs Richards****: They have a, a small amount of careers advice given to them usually through the way now, which is probably the booklet that you had, which gets up-dated every year (yeah) and (.) we, we still give it out.*
>
> ***Mrs Richards:*** *Umm, there have been times in the past where people where, I mean, before your time, where people have had a careers interview and they've come out saying "well that was a load of rubbish!"*
>
> ***Mrs Jones:*** *Its, its very, its (.), this period of changing over systems it really has highlighted what the kids ought to have, what they need to have and what they're not provided, you*

know, what they need to do to manage it. Umm, I would be interested to know of, I assume you've been talking to parents as well (yeah)? Umm, how, how they see, you know what would fetch them to school, what would get them involved (mm). I mean there will always be parents who aren't interested, obviously but the parents who are, I would like to know, I mean what would do it?

***Interviewer**: I'm, I'm not sure. In general, what I've found so far is that most parents were relying on family and friends for information (yeah) and uhh I think time is another factor for most parents most parents were quite uhh busy. I think some parents were unsure about coming in cos they uhh weren't like sure they'd understand everything that was said.*

There was an added emphasis on fostering relationships in widening participation policies, including those between the school and parents in order to best provide support for young adults. Mrs Richards, here, highlighted how the strategies the school had in place, such as providing information in a range of languages, were not working and relationships were fractured. There had to be greater acknowledgement of cultural issues which, although they were attempting to enhance, were still lacking. Her account also stressed how I was a former student at the school through using 'you had' and 'before your time'. Here, I was constructed in terms of changes that had occurred within the school thereby allowing me to gain a greater understanding of the careers process that they had at the school. However, it also served to remind me of my former identity at the school

which preceded my current identity as ‘expert’, one which I was not entirely comfortable with.

Mrs Jones’ interaction with me at the end of her interview was interesting where different positions were constructed and adopted. Through asking me questions about parents, she constructed us both in a power relationship. Mrs Jones presented herself as having less knowledge about what parents want and, thus, required the information from myself. I was positioned as someone who had recently ‘been talking to parents’, an ‘expert’ on the topic, an ‘insider’ who possessed a greater understanding of the nuances of culture, and therefore who had more information to dispense. However, my response was interesting; rather than adopting such a position, I positioned myself differently - as someone who did not have the requisite information. Immediately, I stated ‘I’m, I’m not sure’, the hesitancy highlighting how I did not construct myself as an expert. I continued by offering some general explanations without going into any depth about particular cultural factors which can have an impact and, thus, I did not provide Mrs Jones with anything tangible that she could employ in changing strategies. Consequently, although not embracing the construction, I did not readily resist, conveying how power and resistance are not placed in a dichotomy with each other but instead can often be located in the ‘grey’ area between the two. This also reduced the symbolic power I had during this interview; however, since this interaction occurred near the end of the interview, I did not have the opportunity to try to acquire some back. As such, this interaction emphasised how although my ‘becoming’ had shifted from when I was a

student and I was now positioned differently within the diaspora space, I was not able to adopt new forms of identity easily.

Just as with the parents in this study, teachers used a range of techniques to construct themselves, whether as 'expert' or as one who required 'more knowledge'. Consequently, some teachers did not consider that they possessed the requisite knowledge to be able to effectively advise parents and young adults about possible future options and, thus, their accounts did not link in with widening participation policies. Furthermore, despite school strategies to increase parental participation not working, parents were not constructed as 'deficient' and, instead, there was interest in exploring other avenues in order to rectify this. Interestingly, teachers were also able to construct an identity for myself, structured around being a former student at the school and the expert on the topic, constructions I was not able to fully adopt.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on some of the subject-positions that were constructed during the course of the research process, attempting to shed some light on a principal research aim exploring how British-Sikh identities are constructed and the impact these could have for future aspirations. Identities were constructed alongside configurations of gender, caste and social class but also, religion and culture and highlighted how although 'beings' of participants may have been similar, they were constructing different 'becomings' through their positioning within the diaspora space. Certain

forms of identity could inhibit future options, for example, hegemonic forms of masculinity, where peer group identities were more important than academic achievement, meant that young adults could be constructed as 'deficient' in educational policy as well as excluded from school. Notions of what it meant to be a 'Sikh' were interesting, with both narrow and broader identities being constructed. Such constructions were apparent before, and after, interviews, varied according to context, and had an intricate impact upon constructions of myself. Through this, I conveyed how identities were not static and fixed, but instead were dynamic and fluid, ever-changing, and inscribed with power, through which participants were able to present particular versions of themselves.

I began the chapter by exploring my constructions of participants – I had a range of assumptions that I brought to the research and this was important for exploring how, and why, I constructed individuals in such a way. This was a two-way process; how I constructed others, as well as by the way I constructed myself, were invariably tied in with constructions of participants, and, at times, these were difficult for me to readily embrace, although I did not fully resist them. A range of participants' subject-positions were then investigated and different theoretical approaches, which formed my 'syncretic' approach, were prevalent in the construction of these. Participants used 'dilemmas of stake' (Potter, 1996) to justify the positions they constructed, as well as make criticisms of others. The interplay of power was especially important with and tied in with Bourdieu's symbolic power for exploring *who* had power, and *how* and *why* it was employed. The search for

symbolic power was linked to Skeggs' (1997, 2004) 'respectability', and related to 'ízzat' or family honour, which could have an impact upon the family in the local community. Moreover, constructions of masculinity relied on Butler's (1990, 1993, 1997, 2004) gender 'performance' and Connell's (1995) 'hegemonic' masculinity, highlighting how these identities varied according to both cultural and social contexts and could function as a form of structure for young adults. The construction of these gender identities had, in part, an impact upon the constructions of their future aspirations; some forms of masculinity were not compatible with high academic achievement and young men had to compromise between their status and peer groups. Constructions of Sikh femininity were explored with the two girls in the sample and issues of 'izzat' were once again important, signifying how constructing identities which opposed 'traditional' notions of female roles, located within cultural boundaries, could result in a loss of symbolic capital for parents. These forms of gender identity highlighted how the young adults, and their parents, were constructing a range of different positions within the diaspora space which were context based and intersected by power. The significance of these identities was not incorporated in educational policy and thus were not recognised as a limit for some young adults within the education system.

The penultimate section of the chapter examined constructions by parents. The heterogeneity of parents was demonstrated, stressing how there were important differences between them which a generic educational policy could not hope to fully account for. Parents' constructions of themselves stressed a

contrast between the ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ parent, primarily concerning gender roles; ‘modern’ parents stressed how they gave their children greater autonomy in their future decisions, compared with ‘traditional’ parents who used defensive rhetorical strategies to prevent criticisms. Intergenerational differences between parents and young adults were also evident as caste was more of a consideration for some parents than for their children; a source of symbolic capital within the community, which could be lost with exogamous marriage practices.

The final section concerned teachers’ constructions of themselves. Although some teachers constructed themselves as ‘expert’ on providing parents and students with information, recent developments in the education system saw some teachers question their own role in future decisions, something parents had not considered. Interestingly, my own role was questioned. I had previously had the role of ‘student’ at this school, and, now, was ‘expert’ in the topic being investigated; a position that I found difficult to embrace, but which also conveyed how my own identity had changed and how I was now positioned within the diaspora space.

The following chapter builds on the subject-positions constructed in this chapter and concerns the main research question and other aims - how participants constructed educational and occupational aspirations for young adults. The identities they constructed in this chapter were important for the resources they were able to draw upon when making future decisions, with social class and gender having a significant and intricate impact.

CHAPTER 5:

THE EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF SIKH YOUNG ADULTS

INTRODUCTION

This second data chapter, drawing upon the literature reviewed in Chapters One and Two, and building upon the importance of constructions of identities in the previous chapter, explores the educational and occupational aspirations of Sikh young adults, and how their parents and teachers had a role to play in how such aspirations were constructed. Important here was the AimHigher educational policy, structuring the options that were available to young adults through how they were constructed, having a similar impact as some forms of identity and nuances of culture. The middle-class ideal was emphasised in these policies and responsibility placed on the individual to improve (Archer and Yamashita, 2003), which could result in some young adults positioned against this standard. Furthermore, teachers responsible for selecting students constructed certain identities as incompatible with academic success, particularly those concerning hegemonic masculinity, not choosing these young men and, thereby, constraining future options. This policy also acted as a form of structure on parents and teachers who were constructed differently; some parents, especially those from the working-class, just as with their children, were constructed against policy for failing to participate in school events and for their lack of English. Thus, their lack of the 'right' cultural capital hampered them.

Several key themes emerged, both within, and across the data drawn from clusters of parents, young adults and teachers, based on the interviews I conducted with them. These themes were present at the macro-level, where concerns, for example, within the 'wider community' were apparent, including notions of 'competition' with other families. Furthermore, the data showed how participants were positioned differently within clusters, conveying how different positions within the diaspora space were evident according to their gender, social class and caste.

Here, particular ideas, relating to certain young adults, were useful in the data analysis including Bourdieu's (1985, 1989, 1992) notions of symbolic, social and cultural capital which students used in a variety of ways, highlighting how such resources were not drawn upon in any uniform manner, but in unique and distinct forms. In addition, aspects of identity, as explored in the previous chapter, were important, particularly those around configurations of gender, highlighting how although young adults may have shared points of identity, their 'becomings' varied as did how they were positioned within the diaspora space, alongside, and against, others. Notions of 'izzat' could define future decisions, having a significant impact upon which future options were considered appropriate, and others which were to be rejected. Here, Skeggs' (1997, 2004) research on 'respectability' was helpful in explaining this. Upholding and maintaining 'izzat' could be considered as the search for cultural respectability, especially for women, in the local community and, accordingly, could be seen as a form of symbolic capital, which allowed certain options and constrained others. Such findings were

also found with young men; the forms of masculinity they created, including 'hegemonic', could be detrimental for their future choices, limiting what they could do. Interestingly, as seen from the previous chapter, caste was not so important when constructing future decisions; Britain was considered to be a far more meritocratic society.

This chapter could have been structured in a variety of ways, all of which would add something to the data analysis, whilst, simultaneously, lacking something. Consequently, I decided to explore the middle-class and working class young adults in separate sections since class had such a significant impact, and how other social factors, such as gender, intersected and interwove this process, impacting upon 'becomings' and subject-positions within the diaspora space. These positions allowed a range of resources to be used in the construction of aspirations, including a range of capitals such as social networks and, moreover, focusing on social class permitted me to explore the interrelationship between parents, teachers and young adults. As such, structuring the chapter in this way can be seen as fitting in with my theoretical framework, which moves away from stricter forms of social constructionism that focus on the text alone, to a more realist approach, where context is important in explanations of future educational and occupational aspirations.

This chapter begins by briefly exploring how young adults' constructed their subject choices for GCSEs during Year 9. The proceeding sections explore how Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital were drawn upon by middle-

class students and their parents when constructing future educational and occupational aspirations, before exploring the role that teachers played in these constructions. Teachers were explored separately as current structures within the school, along with the high turnover of staff, resulted in them having little knowledge and input into how future decisions were constructed. The section on working-class students is almost a mirror of the first. Notions of habitus and capital are explored, along with how these students and their parents drew upon them when constructing aspirations and choices, before exploring the role teachers played. Young adults and parents, despite occasionally sharing the same social position, had different accesses to various forms of capital, highlighting the heterogeneity in how aspirations and choices were constructed. Finally, I explore how racism had a bearing in constructions of all pupils. Accounts of racism did not vary according to social class, but were, instead, apparent in the extracts of all pupils.

5.1 THE CONSTRUCTION OF GCSE SUBJECT CHOICES FOR, AND BY, SIKH YOUNG ADULTS

How young adults made their GCSE choices was important to explore, giving an insight into the resources young adults drew upon in the decision-making process. All the young adults were currently in their final year of studying GCSEs and, apart from the core subjects, were studying a range of optional subjects, from History and Art, to Music and Information Technology. However, the subject that was prevalent for almost all the students was Business Studies; eight of the 10 pupils, seven boys and one girl, revealed that they were taking the subject. Although a range of reasons were given to justify choices, parents and young adults' accounts varied to that of teachers. In general, parents and pupils, both male and female, and working- and middle-class[18], expressed that GCSE choices should be made according to what pupils felt they were 'good' at and 'interested' in:

> ***Interviewer*** *– Uhh, how did you make those choices?*
>
> ***Amarpreet (middle-class boy)*** *– Well, uhh the teachers told me like choose your best subjects which you're good at (mm) and I love, uhh I chose Business because I wanna do business feature, something to do with uhh business (yeah). I don't know where Geography came about, I just had a good mark for that so it was as simple as that. Erm, Graphics because I love drawing so I thought do that*

[18] The students were classified into different social classes, as stated in the Methodology chapter, according to government stratification tables, which defined pupils according to their highest parents' occupation.

and French because I chose that in Year 7, 8 and 9 so I thought I'd continue.

In this extract, Amarpreet suggested he had been solely responsible for making his GCSE choices (e.g. 'I chose', 'I love'). He did not mention any consultation with parents, teachers or peers, or any information from 'official sources', such as the careers service; choices for GCSEs were solely his decisions. As I suggest throughout this chapter, Amarpreet, despite being middle-class, did not share many attributes which define this social category. His parents' relatively recent migration to the UK from India, tied in with the 'wrong' habitus and capitals they possessed, meant that Amarpreet shared similar 'beings' with working-class students in this sample. However, Amarpreet's account was similar to other young adults in this sample, suggesting that implicit constructions in the AimHigher programme where the middle-class ideal was favoured did not hold true for all middle-class who were heterogeneous.

Alternatively, teacher's extracts were positioned within government rhetoric of making a rational choice based upon information:

Interviewer *– Is, is PSHE the main period for talking about careers?*

Mr Peters (Head of Year) *– Yes, yes. PSHE is, it's an hour and ten minutes a week so from Year 9 when they're starting their options and choosing which subjects they are interested in and want to do (yeah), GCSE and then obviously into A level, the, the focus*

changes and they, they actually spend the term looking at careers, looking at all options and then making those choices from there. Umm, I think, you could ask Mrs Jones who's the Head of PSHE, I think they also use career booklets that are created nationally [inaudible], they're also used as resources from which they can (.) gauge what careers they might actually be interested in (okay).

Even though the initial question concerned the careers service and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education), Mr Peters described the process of thinking about careers beginning from Year 9 onwards using different linguistical resources from Amarpreet. Mr Peters emphasised 'they' indicating that the focus here is on the student. His account, compared with Amarpreet's, focused more on making an informed choice through providing pupils with as much information as possible including 'career booklets' and other 'resources' and students would 'spend the term' exploring choices and 'all options'. Thus, broader issues were stressed; Mr Peters discussed pupils in general and how their 'interests' link in with the future and with information provided 'nationally'. In this way, his account can be seen to link in with government rhetoric[19], where linking pupils' interests with information will lead to 'better' choices and a more prestigious job - which was implicit within AimHigher. However, this was not evident in the talk of pupils or parents when they considered how they had decided upon their GCSE choices.

[19] e.g. http://www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow/

5.2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF FUTURE EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS BY MIDDLE-CLASS YOUNG ADULTS

As already established, middle-class and working-class students were constructed differently in the AimHigher programme, with the middle-class ideal considered desirable for possessing 'right' form of habitus and cultural capital. Such policy could act as a form of structure, changing placing individual responsibility on the student to adapt to this ideal, thereby limiting agency (Archer, 2007). Stark differences between how the middle-class and working-class young adults constructed their future educational and occupational choices were evident in this research, fitting in with other research which has explored differences between such young adults (e.g. Hodkinson, 1995; Ball & Vincent, 1998; Hemsley-Brown, 1999; Crozier, 2000; Vincent, 2001) where Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital were significant.

However, these middle-class students were not a homogeneous group - there were important differences between them, including their migratory patterns, which meant that they had different habitus and were positioned at different points in government policy. Ravinder and Kiran were more likely to possess the 'right' form of habitus due to their parent's education, occupations, proficiency in English, and migratory patterns. Alternatively, Amarpreet, because of his relatively recent migration to the UK from India, his parent's lack of English, and aiming to be the first member of his family to

participate in HE, was positioned against this ideal, 'lacking' the necessary habitus and capital which would have made him a candidate for widening participation schemes despite being 'middle-class'. Consequently, different middle-class students had different identities and were positioned differently against, and alongside, each other in the diaspora space and in educational policy.

There were similarities between these students and, for all of them, A Levels were considered the norm in FE and other options were not considered. When asked about their plans after GCSEs, these young adults replied:

> ***Kiran (middle-class girl)*** *– I want to do Law....I already know mostly the subjects I want to do. Like I know I want to do English and they do A Level Law here so I'm going to do that and then Psychology or something like that.*
>
> ***Amarpreet (middle-class boy)*** *– Uhh, what A levels (yeah? I wanna choose, I mean I chose Maths, uhh Chemistry, uhh Economics and I.T. In the future I want to do something to do with (.) accounting or something like that (mm), something to do with business really.*
>
> ***Ravinder (middle-class boy)*** *– Erm, well for starters I've chosen A Levels in Theatres Studies, Media Studies, Psychology. The reasons being cos of my future career you know cos they all combine in some sort of way so (.) hopefully it should help me out. I've also chosen Physics*

uhh, erm at the end of the year I will drop that cos it might seem a bit hard (yeah) from what I've heard.

All of these students highlighted 'middle-class confidence' when constructing choices which were were not made in isolation, but embedded within their aspirations and, in this way, choices were rationally constructed alongside long-term 'plans', where futures could be imagined, and prepared for. These findings fitted in with Ball et al's (2001) research which I explored in Chapter One which distinguished between how middle-class and working-class young adults constructed their choices. The 'embedded' choosers are seen as having 'middle-class confidence'; a 'taken-for-granted' assumption that the young adult will enter Higher Education, partially based upon their own parents' experiences of university. Alternatively, the working-class are characterised by a lack of knowledge and experience of post-16 education and are therefore seen as 'contingent' choosers.

When asked why they made such choices, the middle-class students replied with certainty once again, providing rational reasons, framed within established, longstanding ideas, rather than decided upon haphazardly:

***Kiran**: I don't really know how I decided to do Law, it's just, I know ever since I was little that's what I wanted to do and don't know what else I really wanna do.*

***Ravinder:** Cos I've been doing magic for five and a half years now.*

Their habitus was important in framing their future decisions; HE was seen as the norm rather than an exception for each of them. Consequently, Kiran's choices reflected how she wanted to continue into Law; Amarpreet's choices focused on Business or Accountancy; and Ravinder's decisions were based around his 'future career', that of a magician. Thus, for these middle-class pupils, there was a strong interrelationship between educational and occupational aspirations, rather than seeing them as discrete categories.

All these middle-class students showed confidence in their choices and these findings can be seen to fit in with other research I explored in Chapter One including Hodkinson and Sparkes' (1997) concept of 'careership'. They argue that young adults' decisions are located within their 'horizons for action', the arena through which we perceive and make decisions about the world. Thus, for Hodkinson and Sparkes, people's horizons for actions are both objective and subjective, determining future opportunities and perceptions of what is possible, what is unlikely and what is not considered. Similarly, Reay (2004) perceives habitus as making certain things 'inconceivable', some things 'possible' and a narrow range of options are perceived as 'acceptable'. A levels for these students were seen as an 'acceptable' and an expected route into FE and then HE, which were also considered as an expectation, where they 'belonged', rather than something they hoped to do. Habitus, then, acted as a form of structure, limiting the young adults' future options and explicitly deeming what was acceptable for them to do and what was not to be considered. However, despite lacking detailed knowledge of vocational

routes, these young adults still saw vocational courses as an opportunity into FE if need be:

> ***Amarpreet:*** *I don't really know about GNVQs but I probably will do them if I have to, yeah.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *If you did an NVQ, GNVQ would you still want to do law then?*
>
> ***Kiran:*** *If it was possible but I dunno if it would be. They're like "Really, you have to have this many A levels", we've been told that NVQs are equal to A levels but my Mum said they're not (hmm). You know they're different, if you have someone who's got a degree and someone whose got other stuff like apprenticeship they're gonna choose someone whose got a degree.*

Students' extracts here were similar to those in Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's (2001) study. They found that Year 11 pupils gave a range of reasons for not wanting to undertake vocational courses in FE and these included such qualifications not being 'high' enough for their career ambitions, vocational qualifications having little market value, and apprenticeships not being provided for future careers. In effect, vocational courses were perceived to be of a lower level than A Levels. Both Kiran and Amarpreet demonstrated a lack of knowledge about the exact vocational routes they could take to realise their career ambitions; they were not considered important and were not realistically considered as options.

Furthermore, Kiran did not place a great deal of value on NVQs and saw them as having little symbolic value in the employment market. However, they were still considered as part of a long-term plan once again to enter HE if all else failed.

These students' decision-making was context related and, for all of them, their parents, despite a lack of post-16 education in the UK, were an important consideration when deciding what to do, fitting in with similar research on middle-class students which I explored in the first chapter (e.g. Vincent, 2001; Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Hemsley-Brown, 1999; Hodkinson, 1995), including finding middle-class parents as more likely to encourage their children into FE and HE (Archer, 2003). The quotes from the students below help to shed further light on this. Although students emphasised that their parents had given them full responsibility for future choices, their choices were located within strict parameters as to what parents expected their children to do. As such, not only did government policies act as a form of structure on future choices and aspirations, restricting young adults' agency, but so did familial habitus.

There were many similarities between members of this sample, but also subtle and obvious variations in their accounts. These parents expressed an interest in their child entering Higher Education which would provide forms of capital useful for attaining a professional career:

> ***Kiran's Mother:*** *We both want her to do A Levels then know she will continue into something*

professional, something good erm like Law or Medicine.

Amarpreet's Father: *He has to go to university, Accountancy is uhh a good area.*

Ravinder's Father: *It's important that he goes to university, professional qualifications are important these days if you are to find a good job. Me and my wife both know that A Levels are the best way to erm do this.*

The parents' here placed greater importance on framing their children's choices in terms of a longer term 'plan' once again, conveying how they both had a similar habitus. Choices here were constructed in terms of what it meant to have a 'good' career for both Kiran and Amarpreet's parents, located within traditionally thought of 'good careers' for Asians including engineering, medicine and law (Hussan & Bagguley, 2007). These parents were more likely to confer and explore options, as seen with Kiran's mother ('we both') and Ravinder's father ('me and my wife') so that everyone was focused on the same goals, demonstrating how these parents had similar 'becomings' and positions within the diaspora space, of which social class was an intricate element. Such findings fitted in with earlier research on the middle-class I explored in the first chapter, with the middle-class found as pooling their resources of the benefit of their children (e.g. Vincent, 2001; Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Archer, 2003). Even Ravinder's father, despite encouraging his son to pursue a career in entertainment, expressed a preference for both FE and HE which would not be requisite in such a career;

familial habitus ensured that education was considered a necessity which could increase the symbolic capital that these parents possessed in the local community.

Parents' accounts linked in with those of their children; they were confident their children would enter FE and HE, seen as realistic and attainable, rather than something to aspire to. However, this was simplistic – HE was seen as automatically leading to a 'good' career without considering how economic factors could impact upon labour markets, fitting in with assumptions made in AimHigher. All these parents, although possessing formal education, were educated in India and East Africa thereby having little 'formal' experiences of their own in this country. Their habitus, although relatively stable, was dynamic, shifting across generations and physical boundaries, rather than something that remained static and, as explored in the first literature chapter, this meant that not all of them were confident when interacting with the education system in this country as they may have been elsewhere. In particular, Amarpreet's parents, because of their lack of English and knowledge of the education system, were positioned as weaker to Kiran and Ravinder's parents. They were more likely to be constructed against the ideal in educational policy for not possessing the requisite cultural capital in order to interact effectively with the school themselves, and shared characteristics associated with the working-class. Consequently, these parents' accounts did not fit in with other research on the middle-class and HE which I explored in Chapter One (e.g. Hemsley-Brown, 1999), which found the choice-making process to be a rational process after all the information has been collected.

The middle-class in this study were instead heterogeneous, with varying habitus and access to different forms of capital, questioning the middle-class standard aimed for in educational policy. I explore this further in the next section.

Furthermore, as Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) point out, “Dispositions in a person’s habitus are often deep-seated and relatively stable, but they can and do change over time and through experience” (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2003: 5). As can be seen, the young adults’ habitus, although relatively stable, were changing as they did not entirely share the same outlook as their parents. This was further exhibited as Ravinder did not aspire to a ‘traditional’, middle-class, professional career, located firmly within HE, instead aspiring to become a magician. In addition, despite the greater confidence they demonstrated when constructing choices, the three middle-class students also expressed particular uncertainties about the future. As such, Ravinder was unsure of whether to continue into Higher Education in order to become a magician; Amarpreet was unclear on what options he had to take after university to become an accountant; and Kiran was uncertain about what form of Law she wished to study.

5.21 Middle-Class Young Adults and Social Capital

All three middle-class students had different levels of access to different forms of social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1985, 1986), which had a bearing upon how they constructed aspirations. There were distinct disparities between where the three middle-class students gained their

information about the various courses and careers that they could enter. As Brooks (2003) has argued, there has been a tendency in some educational research (e.g. Ball and Vincent, 2001) to view the middle-classes as a homogeneous entity and "Implicit in these studies seems to be an assumption of a unitary and homogeneous middle class, defined primarily in terms of its difference from the working class" (Brooks, 2003: 289). As I have argued, the middle-class students in this sample were not all equally positioned within educational policies, demonstrating some significant intra-differences relating to the form and amount of capital that they possessed. All three students relied heavily on Ball and Vincent's (1998) 'hot knowledge', acquired through the grapevines of their social contacts and networks, linking in with Bourdieu's (1985, 1986) social capital. When asked how they made their future educational and occupational choices, pupils replied:

> ***Kiran:*** *Umm my cousin he's done it and I was talking it over with him and he said I advise you to take English and Law, the rest are just something that you think you'll be good at or find easy, nothing too hard.*
>
> ***Amarpreet:*** *(.) Uhh my cousin, he wants to be accountant as well. He was telling me that to do accounting, something like that, erm (.) choose Economics for uni, something, do that in uni (mm) and get a degree and then from there…*
>
> ***Ravinder:*** *Erm, yeah I've met a few famous magicians who actually do this you know (yeah). Uhh they started off like that you know, took their A levels,*

everything like that, then they send off their videos to television, they kept trying, kept trying, it didn't work out for them either. But, like they say they kept trying and they didn't like you know give up and they got to television, got their shows done (yeah), they go to do some presenting, stuff like that.

As I explored in the first chapter, Ball and Vincent (1998) point out that there is no single 'grapevine' that individuals may draw upon with several different grapevines existing which are "structured primarily by class-related factors" (Ball and Vincent, 1998: 381). The extracts of all three students highlighted that, despite them all being 'middle-class', they had diverse 'grapevines' which were structured by their different habitus. Kiran and Amarpreet both used their immediate and extended family, particularly their cousins, as a rich source for information; their cousins had already 'done it' or wanted to do it 'as well' which made their advice more reliable and, thus, more likely to be drawn upon, However, the repetition of 'something', particularly in Amarpreet's account, highlights a degree of simplicity in such advice. The advice they were offered was simplistic, linear in its content, meaning that various decisions that had to be made, including forms of training that one has to go through in order to become a barrister or accountant, were not offered. Furthermore, the competitiveness in such careers was not discussed; since cousins were going through the education process themselves, or had just finished, they perhaps did not realise this at present. Amarpreet and Kiran themselves were also passive; they did not question the advice they were given but instead accepted it.

Ravinder, on the other hand, had a greater reliance on social contacts from networks in the entertainment industry that he had gradually built up over the years. Through exploring his future career aspirations, it was possible to see Ravinder's habitus and identity as shifting from those of other students since magic was such a unique and specialised career, requiring particular resources in order to be successful. In the above extract, the repetition of 'they' showed how much importance Ravinder placed upon the routes that the magicians have taken for their careers. They are 'famous magicians' who have their own 'shows' and have been on 'television' giving their advice greater credibility. Moreover, compared with Amarpreet and Kiran, members of Ravinder's grapevine were already in their chosen profession and he wanted to follow their route to success. They also discussed positives and negatives with Ravinder, including when 'it didn't work out for them either', thereby placing choices in a practical manner.

Middle-class parents also drew heavily on their social networks for advice and information and in order to organise work experience:

> ***Ravinder's Mother:*** *We usually ask erm others for advice. His auntie is very good cos she knows where to go for uhh information, takes him to shows that he's performing, things like that. She also finds out information about where there are talent shows so it's good for us as we don't always have time for it you know.*

> ***Kiran's Father:*** *My friend's son is a solicitor so we're asking him for work experience after her exams which will be good for her, show her a bit more about the uhh job.*

Ravinder's parents relied heavily on his aunt to provide information for their son, organise talent shows and act as a chaperone. Since 'magic' was such a specialist occupation, his parents, despite being middle-class and having greater cultural capital, did not have much knowledge. Thus, they depended upon Ravinder's aunt who 'knows where to go for uhh information'. Alternatively, since Kiran wanted to enter a far more 'traditional' career, it was easier for her father to use social contacts to organise work experience. Such work experience would be invaluable, providing Kiran with 'a bit more about the uhh job' so that she can make a more informed choice. Amarpreet's father, in part because of his relatively recent arrival in the UK, had far less knowledge than other parents and therefore had to depend far more heavily upon social networks because of his migration patterns:

> ***Amarpreet's Father:*** *Uhh usually we ask friends of family. My wife's sister is a teacher so she knows more than us. It's harder for us to understand you know as we come from India.*

As both Amarpreet's parents were from India, their habitus limited the various forms of capital available to them in a newer context despite having more value in India, and, accordingly, they had a distinct lack of cultural capital to draw upon despite being middle-class. As stated before, they were more likely to be constructed against the middle-class ideal in policy and, to offset

this, they had to rely upon ‘experts’ in their social network. Such ‘experts’ had a similar ‘being’ to them, but different ‘becomings’ through their positions within the diaspora space which meant that they were able offer different perspectives. Amarpreet’s aunt was asked for advice; being a teacher meant that ‘she knows more than us’, giving her ‘voice’ greater authority since she was constructed as ‘expert’ in the education field. Identities that were created for individuals could therefore have an important impact upon the capitals that they were able to utilise to help decide on a range of future options. There was certainly a connection between using social capital and cultural capital for these young adults and their parents, which is explored below.

5.22 Middle-Class Young Adults and Cultural Capital

There were further disparities between these three middle-class students when their cultural capital was explored. I reviewed some literature in Chapter One which found the middle-class were likely to possess more cultural capital which they were able to use as a resource (e.g. Crozier, 2000; Vincent, 2001; Archer, 2003, Brown and Hesketh, 2004). However, despite being middle-class, issues of migration, alongside constructions in educational policy, served as a form of structure for Amarpreet who did not, because of his family background, conform to earlier research.

Amarpreet relied predominantly on his social network rather than on ‘cold knowledge’ (Ball & Vincent, 1998), such as information leaflets and booklets provided by the school, or actively searching for information himself - characteristics more associated with the working-class. His parents were not

able to advise him as to where he could go for information as he, himself, stated:

> ***Amarpreet:*** *My parents just go "ask your cousin" because my parents are from India and they don't really know about education over here.*

As both his parents were from India, the cultural capital they possessed was located within that cultural context and, thus, partly because of their lack of English, it was not possible for them to transfer it to this country. As such, Amarpreet's parents 'don't really know about education over here', and through this, he constructed an identity for them where, despite being 'middle-class', their migration meant that they were positioned weaker as compared with other parents who had greater cultural capital and could engage with the education system to better effect. Instead, it was the 'cousin' who was constructed as inhabiting a position of power through having greater knowledge of future options through having been through the process, emphasising their different positions within the diaspora space. Intricate configurations of social class, with area of parental origin and their language difficulties, once again highlighted the complexity in future choices and how Amarpreet did not 'fit in' with other middle-class students and was more akin to the working-class. As such, students like Amarpreet had to be acknowledged more in AimHigher if it was to be as effective as possible.

The heterogeneity of these Sikh middle-class young adults was, once again, stressed through how Ravinder and Kiran possessed greater cultural capital than Amarpreet, actively searching for information themselves:

> ***Ravinder:*** *Umm, they [the teachers] do give us like Internet sites, umm places where you can, like for example job centres. You can see what's available for you. They're always giving us information about where we can find out for ourselves so, and, and not only that the teachers do you know, if you ask them they do help you out you know.*

Although Ravinder did use 'cold' knowledge, it included newer forms which had advanced considerably since Ball and Vincent's (1998) research – the Internet. Rather than 'cold' knowledge being accepted alone, it was tied into teachers' advice to supplement his knowledge. Through his extract, Ravinder constructed intricate subject-positions, infused with symbolic power, where teachers were the ones with knowledge, distributing it to students, who accepted it passively, without question. Ravinder's use of cultural capital did not fit in with other research on middle-class students which has found them to be more independent and proactive in their search for information, to question, rather than accept advice, highlighting their confidence (e.g. Hemsley-Brown, 1999). Cultural issues could have been important here – as Ghuman and Dosanjh (1997, 1998) found, which some parents in this study also stressed, there is the notion of 'respect' for elders in Asian cultures, with the teacher constructed as 'expert' in the field (Bhatti, 1999). In this regard, Ravinder's habitus can be seen as located within cultural boundaries, something which was also found in Amarpreet's accounts.

Kiran, on the other hand, possessed the greatest cultural capital of all and was structured differently in educational policy accordingly. She used a range of resources to supplement the knowledge from her social networks, thereby differing from Amarpreet and Ravinder, showing how her habitus was different:

> ***Kiran:*** *Like if I have time I spend in the library, they have like a section about careers (mm), and just have to look up the books myself and things like that.*
>
> ***Kiran:*** *I know that I really want to go LSE but that's like a really like, you have to do really well and (yeah) you've just been getting like, they've been sending the uhh prospectus, he's [her brother] been looking at them and if he thinks they'll be good then he'll just give them to me.*

Since she had not been given a careers interview at school, she was proactive in searching for information herself in the school library thereby constructing a different 'becoming' compared with Ravinder, who was reliant on teachers for 'cold' knowledge. Such information was not limited to careers alone; Kiran also used 'cold knowledge' to read material on university despite her HE choices not being imminent. Kiran was giving considerable thought to them; her choice of HE institution linked in with the idea of long-term planning rather than on the short-term and was also tied in with her gender. Her habitus, with greater familial cultural capital, allowed her to draw upon resources that her brother used compared with the other middle-class young adults who did not have access to such resources. Importantly, as she

stressed in the previous chapter, Kiran realised that cultural constraints placed on women within the local community because of their gender meant that she had to work harder in order to overcome negative constructions where higher academic achievement was tied in with a loss of 'izzat' and symbolic capital; issues which were not fully explored in government rhetoric and could have a significant impact upon the construction of future aspirations. However, for Kiran's parents, this symbolic capital was more linked to the not entering a career which was considered 'dangerous', such as a form of Law dealing with criminals.

5.23 Middle-Class Young Adults and Symbolic Capital

These three middle-class students, although not the primary focus of widening participation policies, were from 'non-traditional' backgrounds and these policies did not fully explore the nuances of culture and the impact they could play on the construction of future aspirations. Essential here was symbolic capital and its importance in the construction of these young adults' future aspirations. But, once again, just as with other forms of capital, symbolic capital was not conveyed in a homogenous manner but could be framed in terms of an extended family/community context; how it 'looked' for other members of the extended family, and the wider Sikh community, had a bearing upon how and why certain aspirations and choices were constructed, encouraging certain things, enabling certain options and dissuading others. 'Professional' careers were particularly considered attractive, enhancing the 'izzat' or family honour of a family. However, this was not always the case for females, and continued education could see a loss of 'izzat' in some

extended families if ‘traditional’ gender roles were advocated and the woman was expected to become a housewife, fitting in with Basit’s (1996) research on the aspirations of Muslim girls. However, similar to Dale et al’s (2002) research, there was little congruence in how izzat was applied by different families and, as Sekhon and Szmigin (2005), found, the context could be important as to how it functioned - symbolic capital could vary according to where the young adult’s parents had migrated from; greater importance was placed on such capital for future careers by those from India as compared with East Africa, conveying how migratory patterns could be important in how habitus shifted, changed and adapted to newer contexts.

For Ravinder, symbolic capital was not important, in part, because such capital was not important for his parents who allowed him to pursue a career as a magician:

> ***Ravinder*** *– I'm quite lucky actually cos you don’t usually see Asian kinda of parents, they always want you to become a doctor or something like that. But my parents have a bit, given me the full potential to, for what I'm into (mm) as long as all my education is complete. So, they're very happy and very supportive about it.*

Ravinder highlighted how important it was that his family was different, placing more emphasis on what he wants and less on other members in the community. Other Asian parents ‘always’ wanted their children to be a ‘doctor’ or ‘something like that’, referring to professional careers, whereas Ravinder was allowed to pursue his own endeavours in magic and entertainment and, therefore, was ‘lucky’. Hence, continuing in education, in

order for it to be ‘complete’, was framed in terms of his long-term prospects, linking in with his father’s earlier extract.

For Kiran, however, symbolic capital was linked to gender. For her, being a girl meant that certain options should not be considered by her extended family:

> ***Kiran:*** *I think that’s because I’m a girl or something. They [members of her extended family] might just think that she’s a girl and she should just, I don’t know, stay at home or something (yeah) cos some of the people in my family are a bit like that, they think that she should just stay at home.*

As I explored in the previous chapter, ‘traditional’ gender roles were advocated by members of Kiran’s extended family since girls should ‘just stay at home’ casting doubt over whether a woman should be allowed to work. Kiran constructed such behaviour as alien (‘bit like that’) for her, and could not understand (‘I don’t know’) this. Education, for her, gave a certain symbolic capital allowing her to resist and reject hegemonic forms of behaviour, located within cultural boundaries, which constructed a particular gender identity for her through what she is permitted to do in her future. In this respect, education, and a career in Law, would give her a negative symbolic capital, at least for her extended family.

Forms of identity were important here when constructing future options for females and both Kiran and her parents demonstrated that they were

constructing different identities to relatives; their 'becomings' taking a different form through their positioning within the diaspora space. Nevertheless, although Kiran and her parents rejected such ideas restricting choices based upon gender, her parents still sought some symbolic capital which concerned her academic achievements, enhancing 'izzat', which was also prevalent for Amarpreet. These cultural nuances, very important for these young adults and parents and their future aspirations, were not accounted for in educational policy and emphasised the need for a more targeted policy rather than a generic one:

> ***Kiran:*** *It's really hard for someone like the young child so I have to do whatever my brother does and I have to do better and he did quite well, he got As and Bs and he only got one C. My Mum was like "You have to do better than him, and then I expect you to do better in, than him in A Levels and everything you have to do better" and they just make it really hard. But not all parents are like that. My cousin's parents they don't, they don't care. Like she does what she wants (mm).*

> ***Amarpreet:*** *(.) It's quite useful. It's been better since they didn't put as much pressure on me because uhh before, before you go Year 10, Year 9 and Year 8, there used to be so much pressure on me that you have to get the best grades (mm), and I just worked*

hours and hours but you know couldn't get the best grades (yeah). And, you know when you do the exam, you keep thinking what will your parents think if you don't do well (yeah), and uhh now because they don't put pressure on me, you can actually focus more on the test you know without thinking what your parents are gonna think (mm), so (.) it's better.

Interviewer: *Why do you think your parents put so much pressure on you before?*

Amarpreet: *It's probably because my other cousins got all As, those type of grades (yeah) and I know they want me to do the best I could but uhh probably because they want me to copy them, you know do really well (yeah).*

Interviewer: *Erm, do you think that's quite important, within the family and community to do well?*

Amarpreet: *I mean it is uhh, if I don't like, if I don't get like all Cs or something, then it is gonna be embarrassing innit I mean compared to all the As, I get all Ds or something (yeah). So, they have told me that it will be embarrassing for us (mm), got to make us proud and all that.*

Kiran indicated how high academic achievement is a must for her; A and B grades are something that are expected, rather than hoped for, and simple passes were not good enough. She gave two personal examples to support

her argument. Firstly, despite being female, she was still expected to achieve higher than her brother by her parents; the implication being that her parents valued higher qualifications even if her extended family did not. Secondly, although her parents make it 'really hard', this was not seen as a negative; comparisons with her cousin indicated it was because her parents 'care' and the 'unsaid', which can be equally important, being that her cousin's parents are not concerned with their child's future. This form of symbolic capital, located within the family, was seen as something to motivate, rather than discourage, Kiran and highlighted how her familial habitus was changing and shifting compared with members of the extended family. Through being positioned differently within the diaspora space, new meanings and forms of behaviour were possible for Kiran and her family resulting in different 'becomings' being possible, particularly when concerning the construction of future aspirations.

Similarly, Amarpreet's symbolic capital concerned his immediate and extended family, as well as the community. However, the pressures with 'how it looked' to others was so great that it had a detrimental impact upon him; despite working 'hours and hours' he was not able to do well in tests because he was worried about what his parents would think. Once again, it was important to emulate, or better, cousins so 'face' and 'izzat' was not lost in the community. Consequently, C grades were seen as 'embarrassing', which, just as with Kiran, suggested failure; 'A's' and 'those types of grades' were seen as desirable and expected. Such a failure was a concern for the family, as well as Amarpreet. Thus, he felt he had to make his parents 'proud'

otherwise it was ‘embarrassing for us’, stressing failure in his parent’s eyes. Here, notions of competition, with his cousins, and other members of the community were far more important and corresponded with Mirza’s (1992) notion of the ‘migrant effect’. As Amarpreet’s parents had arrived from India in order to give their children better opportunities, expectations were high; they must not be seen as failures, especially since relatives’ children did well, which could result in a loss of symbolic capital. However, despite the increased pressure, Amarpreet was keen to make his parents proud:

> ***Amarpreet:*** *I would like to go to Oxford [university] but I never thought about going really.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Uhh why Oxford?*
>
> ***Amarpreet:*** *– I dunno it’s like you got the feeling of being one of the best (yeah) (.) of in the world. Uhh (.) and then if I go to one of the best universities my parents would be proud innit and they can go to whoever and ever (yeah) saying that my, my son goes to Oxford University or something like that (yeah) and that would obviously make them proud innit. And umm getting a job would be quite easy then innit, I mean if you’ve been to like some good university, they're gonna think he's a good student (yeah).*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Have you thought about any other universities?*
>
> ***Amarpreet:*** *I don’t know really about universities.*

Here, the notion of symbolic capital was once again prevalent. The recurrence of ‘proud’ and ‘good’ emphasised how going to university would make his parents proud. Although framed in terms of career prospects (‘getting a job would be quite easy then’), it was far more important that his parents could ‘go to whoever… saying my, my son goes to Oxford University’. Despite not knowing ‘really about universities’, going to a ‘good university’ was important for Amarpreet and a source of pride for his family, thereby increasing symbolic capital and conveying how his habitus was similar to that of his parents.

High academic achievement for all these young adults can also be linked to Skeggs’ search for ‘respectability’. Performing well in exams, attending more ‘prestigious’ universities, and gaining higher academic qualifications would all give students and their parents a certain prestige in the local community. This could be seen as positively acting on the ‘izzat’ the family possessed, helping them to increase their standing and giving them symbolic power over other parents whose children have not performed as well. However, ‘failing’ could lead to a loss of symbolic capital, a loss of ‘face’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987) in the local community.

Although the middle-class young adults were explored in this section, the importance of symbolic capital, particularly concerning ‘izzat’, affected all students and conveyed the importance of including and understanding cultural issues far more in widening participation policies which could help to shed light on how and why certain aspirations are formed, both for parents

and young adults. Such information could have been employed to increasing knowledge and producing appropriate policies for different Asian groups rather than having generic ones for all.

5.3 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THE FUTURE DECISIONS OF MIDDLE-CLASS YOUNG ADULTS

As part of the AimHigher programme, the role of teachers was to act as a form of guidance to young adults. Through constantly updating their skill and knowledge base, teachers were able to offer them advice and information on their future routes, including into HE. However, the high teacher turnover at this school, resulting in many teachers not spending much time with their tutor groups, meant that the teachers in this study had scant knowledge about their students, including Amarpreet's tutor, Mrs Jones:

> ***Interviewer:*** *So how much would like uhh tutors of forms know about individual pupils' aspirations?*
>
> ***Mrs Jones (Amarpreet's form tutor):*** *They should do umm but of course it's much easier the longer you've been with them (yeah). Umm, when I (.) took over the Year 11 class it was very difficult umm I was part-time tutor, I shared, I have three days, somebody else had two days, part-time teacher (yeah). Umm, we took it over in Year 11 then she left so (.) you know I was really left (.) with some difficulty (mm) getting to know all the kids and finding out what they were.*

For Mrs Jones, only being a part-time tutor meant that it was difficult to forge relationships with students and there did not appear to be a system in place which would help her to learn about her students and she therefore had to take her own initiative. Combined with the doubling of her role as PSHE co-

ordinator, Mrs Jones was not able to devote as much time to her form group as she would have liked. Furthermore, considering that she had been with her group for less than six months[20], her job was made considerably harder. As such, teachers had basic knowledge of what their students wanted to do, rather than more explicit and detailed knowledge of their future educational and occupational aspirations and, as such, they were not able to offer students specific guidance and information, tailored to their needs, on possible future options. Instead, teachers focused on generic skills young adults possessed:

> ***Mrs Jones (Amarpreet's form tutor) -*** *I've had access to his uhh data records you know his uhh SATS levels and choice and his tests so I know what sort of band and what aspirations umm what level his aspirations ought to be (mm). I had uhh a couple of conversations with him in the mentoring session (.) I picked up from that I think he is a little bit anxious about some subjects but generally confident (mm) about his ability, I think he's undecided about his career path but I know he wants to do higher education (yeah) which is umm (.) I think fine but then it doesn't really matter if he's a bit vague at the moment because wherever he goes whether it's Sixth Form or college or whatever he decides, he is an academic student and shouldn't be in a rush to close*

[20] A form tutor would usually be expected to be with the same group from Year 7 until Year 11.

off any doors (mm) and, as we know, you don't really need to make very concrete decisions until you're in university (yeah), or even afterwards because I mean a degree, uhh good A levels and a degree will give you quite a lot of choice..he does have leadership qualities, he can see things through, he can work with you know, he's got a lot of skills umm which enable him to work in different situations (yeah), he can take things on as an individual or as a member of a group.

Once again, Mrs Jones stressed how she had to take the impetus when trying to find out about Amarpreet's aspirations. She had made an effort to examine his 'data records' to discover what he should be aspiring to, she had 'mentoring sessions' with him, and, thus, she was able to gage that he wanted to enter HE, which he was capable off, and appeared a little uncertain. Once again, the theme of uncertainty arose here as Amarpreet appeared to be 'anxious' and a 'bit vague' with some of his decisions. However, Mrs Jones did not frame this as a negative; it would give him more time to determine what he wanted to do and, thus, be able to make informed, rational and 'concrete' decisions later. This contrasted with Mr Peter's extract, earlier in this chapter, and government rhetoric, which focused more on young adults making a rational choice through information provided for them during Year 10 and Year 11. Compared with students and parents, Mrs Jones instead focused more on the skills and abilities Amarpreet had demonstrated through extra-curricular activities, such as media projects, which would allow him to contribute in many different careers. Consequently,

for Mrs Jones, macro-issues were imperative for young adults; gaining a broader understanding of the world was more important for them at this stage in their lives. Mrs Jones' account links in with other research on the role of teachers and the choice-making process. Macrae, Maguire and Ball (1996) have argued, contrary to widening participation policy, "Teachers hover rather hazily in the background, occasionally having something useful or supportive to say, but for the most part they provide a general sense of "what's out there" and places to look and find out more." (Macrae, Maguire and Ball, 1996: 39). As such, Mrs Jones saw herself as a source of general information for young adults rather than as 'an expert', as someone who could provide illuminating and absolute advice about the future aspirations of these young adults and, in this way, Mrs Jones' account emphasised how government policies concerning the role of the teacher were lacking and impractical.

5.4 The Construction of Future Educational and Occupational Aspirations by Working-Class Young Adults

This section of the chapter explores how working-class students constructed their future choices. These young adults were the 'types' of student that were targeted for the AimHigher scheme since they were from 'non-traditional' groups who had no previous family history of HE. However, the selectiveness of the program, choosing those students who were able to adapt their habitus to perform a 'middle-class' identity, meant that these young adults were, at times, constructed against this ideal for not possessing the requisite habitus and capitals in order to be successful, thereby having an impact upon what future options were open to them. The agency available to these young adults was also constrained by the forms of identities that they constructed. Certain identities, such as performances of 'hegemonic' masculinity as explored in the previous chapter, concerned maintaining positions within peer groups, even though they conflicted with academic achievement. These could have a detrimental impact upon aspirations as they were constructed as incompatible with academic success by teachers responsible for selecting students for AimHigher. Future options were thus limited, emphasising how their 'becomings' were taking a very different course as compared with the middle-class young adults in this sample.

Despite AimHigher seeking to focus on future aspirations and choices throughout most of the secondary school period, in practice constructions of

working-class young adults and parents hampered their future aspirations and choices. As such, definite choices for these working-class students were frequently located within the short-term as compared with the long-term plans of the middle class young adults:

> ***Harjinder (working-class boy):*** *After GCSEs I'll probably go do, stay here, at this school do GNVQ or A levels or something like that.*
>
> ***Jagjit (working-class boy)****: Umm, stay here, Sixth Form and that and then do my A levels and then move on, maybe go to university and that.*
>
> ***Simran (working-class girl):*** *Umm, I have an interest in those subjects so I chose it.*
>
> ***Jaswinder (working-class boy):*** *Next year, well basically, at the moment the teachers have said to me, 'til my GCSE grades come out, they'll decide from there if they want to interview me or not. If they come out and they don't want to interview me, so I'll have to go to a different college otherwise I'm gonna stay down this college (mm).*

As opposed to research on the middle-class which has found such students to have long-term educational strategies (e.g. Ball et al, 2004; Ball and Vincent, 2005), the extracts of all of these students indicated that their aspirations were located within the short-term and they did not make a connection between their immediate educational aspirations and their occupational ones. Thus, Harjinder and Jagjit used several markers to

emphasise how both of them were unsure about what they planned to do in the future, and Simran made A Level choices based on interest alone without considering how they could link to a future career. However, Jaswinder, who appeared to be the most capricious from his extract, was dependent on teachers to decide what he could do, conveyed by the repeated use of 'they' which preceded that of 'I'll' and 'I'm'; he was left in a state of uncertainty until he received his exam results. Despite this, Jaswinder was still very keen to stay on in FE; other options, such as searching for a job, were not considered. Compared with the middle-class students, who conveyed far greater confidence about long-term plans, these students were focused on the immediate future, in particular, the following year. Importantly, how such students were structured in policy had an impact upon what options were open to them. Since the construction and maintenance of certain forms of identity, which were against the ethos of the school and academic work, were important for some of these young adults, they were constructed by teachers responsible for selecting them for AimHigher as not possessing the 'right habitus and capitals in order to be academically successful; the emphasis, once again, being on the individual rather than problems inherent within the educational system. As such, these students were likely to not be selected, meaning that they had a distinct lack of knowledge concerning 'higher' qualifications such as A Levels and opportunities in HE.

Jaswinder's choices were limited as a result of his behaviour in school which he acknowledged, a form of 'stake confession' (Potter, 1996):

> **Jaswinder***: Cos basically(.), my records are not quite you know good as it's supposed to be (okay) cos I've been expelled like about six times now (yeah) and these uhh, they, basically people really get on my nerves innit (yeah) and then they immediately go to my temper and then I lose it, then I lose it and that's it innit and then I hit them first and I always get out innit (yeah), and they kicked me out two or three times.*

Compared with his above extract, Jaswinder concedes blame for his actions rather than trying to 'present face' which placed his 'wait and see' in context. His past actions meant that he had to have a very different 'plan' for the future; he was starting anew compared with the middle-class students who had been planning from a younger age. Also, as I highlighted in the previous chapter, the preservation of his hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) acted as a form of structure over his behaviour, taking precedence over his future education and occupational choices. Performing hegemonic forms of masculinity allowed Jaswinder to acquire a form of symbolic capital. Hence, despite being 'expelled like about six times' and 'kicked me out two or three times', Jaswinder did not try to change. His actions were considered valuable amongst his peers and maintaining this form of capital was important to him as it gave him greater symbolic currency amongst his friends, making him appear 'hard'; higher academic achievement, or clearly defined future goals, would not have had the same impact on the peer group and could have resulted in a loss of symbolic capital. Forms of hegemonic masculinity also served to increase his

symbolic power; through his actions, Jaswinder gained a form of cultural capital where he could demonstrate, and emphasise, 'right' forms of behaviour for such young men, and, simultaneously, this implied that certain forms of behaviour were considered 'soft', namely, studying 'hard'. Such forms of hegemonic masculinity can, therefore, be seen as contrary to government policies and teachers which structure working-class young men as possessing the 'wrong' form of cultural capital, incompatible with academic success. Jaswinder's positioning within his peer group stressed how his 'becoming' was very different from that of the middle-class students where there was greater emphasis placed upon the importance of education. As such, as I argued earlier, structures of identity had an impact upon how young adults were structured in AimHigher, impacting negatively on future options, and constraining entry into FE and HE for young adults.

Consequently, Jaswinder's future choices simply refer to where he would ideally like to study, at Sixth Form, rather than a particular course, once again fitting in with notions of uncertainty, and highlighting how choices for this student were in a state of flux compared with middle-class students who had greater certainty in what they wanted to do, and for whom 'long-term' planning was the norm. Extra information and guidance, which would have been useful for him, was denied due to his constructions and performances of masculinity which instead resulted in Jaswinder's exclusion from school on several occasions.

Such ideas were also prevalent in the accounts of other working-class students and tied into the idea of 'waiting and seeing':

> ***Ajeet:*** *I, I, Yeah summing like that, I'm not sure if I will be able to do that or not though so I'll wait and see innit.*
>
> ***Jagjit:*** *What do mean, like what courses [to study at university] (yeah)? I'm not sure at the moment, I'll see how my GCSEs go and how my A levels go, from there I'll decide when I get there.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *What umm Business course are you doing next year, is that A levels or GNVQ?*
>
> ***Manjinder****: Uhh, that's a intermediate course, I dunno. I think it's GNVQ.*
>
> ***Interviewer*****:** *Why did you decide to do Business next year?*
>
> ***Ajeet:*** *Uhh because the subjects I chose I couldn't do them cos my predicted grades were just too shit (mm).*

For these young adults, themes of uncertainty were tied into a lack of academic achievement; poor achievement resulted in them not demonstrating the potential for FE and HE and being unsure what options were open to them and, thus, notions of 'waiting and seeing' were common in their extracts conveying a similarity in their 'becomings'. Such findings have

been found elsewhere in research on the working-class, which as discussed how these students lack capitals (e.g. (Savage and Egerton, 1997; Brown et al., 2002; Brown, 2003; Brown and Hesketh, 2004). Uncertainty was also present in their 'talk' concerning subjects ('I think it's a GNVQ'), and with courses they could study at university, highlighting that their aspirations for the future were located in the short-term. Although all these working-class pupils wanted to stay on in education, and stressed the importance of it, compared with the middle-class students, they knew their 'place'. Their habitus, the forms of identity they constructed, and government policy structured their choices and, as a result, vocational routes, such as GNVQs, were considered the norm rather than the exception, and future plans were not clearly defined but, instead, were vague. A lack of guidance and information from their teachers which meant that there was a lack of focus on these young adults; their working-class status and lack of adeptness at demonstrating the 'right' form of habitus and capital had a detrimental impact upon where they could gain advice since their constructions of masculinity resulted in these young adults as showing disinterest in education. As such, they were not prioritised for careers interviews.

Teachers did not target these students for the AimHigher programme and, just as with the middle-class young adults, the social networks of these young adults were important and varied depending upon forms of identity that were constructed and how participants were positioned within the diaspora space.

5.41 Working-Class Young Adults and Social Capital

Similar to the middle-class young adults, social capital was heavily relied upon by all these young adults when deciding upon their future choices and this was, in part, due to their paucity of cultural capital, tied in with a lack of parental English and knowledge of the education system, but also since they were constructed against the ideal in policy, resulting in the emphasis being placed on them to improve rather than on problems inherent within the education system itself. Such social networks have to be explored more in educational policy since they were often culturally located and did have an important impact upon how and why certain future options were considered over others:

> ***Interviewer:*** *What have you thought about the advice that they've given you?*
>
> ***Jagjit:*** *Yeah, I thought its good (yeah), cos its like they're already in that field, it's like, I mean I wouldn't listen to someone who's not, who's not very uhh (.) involved in business (yeah). Like they're involved, they've got their own business, they've been running it for two years and that, so yeah.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Umm, how did you come to make those choices?*
>
> ***Harjinder****: – Well, just being into my family business. My family, all are like in India innit, all into business (yeah) and they're like one day come to our*

businesses so, it's quite fun doing like, going round visiting them and doing some work (okay) so that's where I got the idea.

***Interviewer** – Have they given you any advice about // how to?*

***Harjinder** – They've given me quite a lot of advice yeah and like what to do and what not to do (mm), what do you have say, look like see in the market and all that sort of stuff so, and it's got quite a lot of help.*

Both Jagjit and Harjinder found advice from members of their social networks useful, particularly those who had their own business. For Jagjit, the use of 'involved' meant that their advice gained credence since 'they're already in that field' and 'they've been running it for two years' thereby giving it authenticity and legitimacy. Consequently, the advice of those who did not work within business was not considered.

Harjinder's extract emphasised many similarities to Jagjit's; he relied on relatives to give him information about options available to him in business, and made FE and career choices accordingly. However, especially interesting was how he used relatives in India for advice, highlighting how this took precedence over advice from members of his diaspora space, and how his social network transgressed physical boundaries between countries and, thus, how he was able to take a 'translocational position' (Anthias, 2002) when defining his 'becomings'. Furthermore, he was able to ask them questions, a further advantage over 'cold knowledge', and opportunities for

work experience were organised for him which were ‘fun’. These work experience opportunities were given a legitimacy and authenticity despite being based in a different country, with vast differences in educational and occupational demands and opportunities, and appeared to be based around ‘the market’. Once again, although perhaps an exceptional case, the importance of these cultural factors was not explored in AimHigher and a lack of a targeted policy was likely to lead to the loss of many interesting and important sources of information as to how future aspirations and choices are constructed.

Although employing usual sources, such as the extended family, for information, these working-class pupils were more likely to depend upon their peers for information, which could be a key source of information, particularly if young adults were not gaining satisfactory guidance from teachers or the careers service. There is perhaps a need to incorporate this into educational policy in order to understand how and why some choices are constructed:

> ***Manjinder:*** *Yeah I just chose Chinese [for A Levels] innit that's about it cos my mates are doing it.*
>
> ***Permjeet****: Umm, he [friend at college] was just saying to me, saying “if you don’t get the grades and that, try at other uni, umm colleges (mm), they, they, some colleges take less innit (yeah), and uhh if you don’t get into this Sixth Form you can go to a different college and do A levels”.*

> ***Jaswinder:*** *Well (.) I think my uhh new girlfriend and that, she's told me to do the apprenticeship, everything (yeah). She gives it "if you don't get your grades that you want, you can do apprenticeship and get some uhh things for English and stuff like that (yeah), so then later on at least you can get a good job that you'll be doing from you know eight, nine o'clock till three, four o'clock innit (mm) and it'll be better for you". I basically like, at the moment I don't really know what that means (mm), getting a apprenticeship or whatever.*

For these young adults, social capital was imperative in shaping their future aspirations and choices, from choosing subjects to getting information about FE institutions and options outside of studying. 'Footing' (Potter, 1996) was used in their extracts, to emphasise that the knowledge they received was from others. Compared with the information that middle-class students acquired from their social networks, the information that these students obtained was simplistic, without giving them much detail, highlighting how 'grapevines' vary in nature rather than being uniform (Ball and Vincent, 1998).

For Manjinder, choosing the Chinese A Level was solely about joining in with his peers rather than a reflection of his own interest in the subject, the content of the course, or indeed how such a subject could link in with plans for the future. Permjeet's account of his friend's advice showed how he was

already preparing himself for lower achievement, and, since A Levels were a priority, he was also considering moving to another college since ‘some colleges take less’. Nevertheless, the advice that he received did not include specific details about which colleges would accept him with lesser grades, whether he would be able to study the subjects that he wanted, or explicit details and requirements that a college would demand in order to study there. Jaswinder used ‘stuff like that’ and ‘I don’t really know…’ to explicitly acknowledge that he did not have much knowledge about the vocational options open to him. His girlfriend did not provide him with any indication about where he could get information, which companies could provide him with an apprenticeship, and other requirements, such as requisite GCSEs, which were essential to obtaining such a position. As such, Jaswinder said ‘apprenticeship or whatever’ to show how apprenticeships were not really considered. From these young adults, the nature of advice shows that their social networks were not as defined or as reliable as those of the middle-class students. Although they were likely to draw upon peers as well as extended family for advice, the advice that they received from peers was rather simplistic compared with that of other members of their network. The importance of peer groups and maintaining these relationships once again came to the fore, highlighting how they were important for identities and also when constructing future choices. There was a lack of attention paid to this in AimHigher which focused on providing young adults with information in order to make a rational choice, neglecting a detailed exploration of the importance of different forms of identity when constructing aspirations.

The parents of these working-class pupils also drew heavily on social networks for advice and information which related to other research on Asian parents I explored in Chapter One (e.g. Basit, 1996, 1997; Bhatti, 1999). Cultural and social factors were important here - constructions of teachers, based on parent's own educational experiences tied in with their lack of English and knowledge about the education system, meant that they were constructed against the middle-class ideal in policy, and their social networks were invaluable as a source of information, guidance and support:

> ***Jagjit's Mother:*** *Erm, well we ask friends for help. Their children are a bit older you know so they know more than us.*
>
> ***Harjinder's Father:*** *We're from India so it's better to get help from others who know more than we do.*

Both Jagjit's mother and Harjinder's father, who had both been educated in India, had a lack of knowledge about the education system in this country, which is why they were reliant on others. As a result, they constructed an identity where they positioned themselves as weaker in the diaspora space as compared with parents who had more knowledge, or those who had been through the process with their own children; a similar weaker position was constructed for them in educational policy compared with middle-class parents. Since such parents were constructed as having more power, their knowledge of the education system giving them greater symbolic capital, their advice was accepted rather than questioned, which was similar to Amarpreet's parents and conveyed how social class was not the sole factor, but area of origin could also be significant.

Nevertheless, not all parents used their social networks for their children; some refused to be proactive if they decided that their child did not deserve this effort. Such parents were not considered in AimHigher, and cultural issues defined whether parents attended school and took an interest in their children's education:

> ***Manjinder's Father:*** *There is no point in finding out things for him, he doesn't do anything, will not anyway, so no no uhh point.*
>
> ***Simran's Father:*** *No we don't uhh ask others for help. I don't want her to go to university so what's the point?*

Although both fathers did not ask for help from others as they did not see the 'point', they had very different reasons for doing so and constructed different forms of identity for their children which were not compatible with FE and beyond. Manjinder's father constructed his son as 'useless' since 'he doesn't do anything' and, through this identity, positioned Manjinder against other young adults who do study and who are more academically able. Alternatively, Simran's father did not ask for advice or information from others for other reasons - her gender, in this case, constrained what she was allowed to do and she was not expected to go to university. Instead, as mentioned elsewhere, more 'traditional' constructions of female roles were present in his accounts, which were, for him, culturally positioned. In this way, it was possible to see how these parents' 'becomings', framed within their habitus, were located differently to other parents in the diaspora space.

Since their children were not considered 'worthy' of help, there was a risk that these parents could lose symbolic capital in the local community by using their social networks, and, through constructing these identities, these parents could justify why they did not help their children.

5.42 Working-Class Young Adults and Cultural Capital

Some previous research I explored in Chapter One on the working-class has explored how they possess less cultural capital resources which they are able to draw upon when constructing future aspirations, relying on their social networks for information (e.g. Ball and Vincent, 1998). The importance of possessing the 'right' form of cultural capital has also been stressed in AimHigher, limiting future options for those positioned against the middle-class ideal in policy. When considering the cultural capital all students in this study possessed, rather than being placed in a dichotomy, there were a range of gradations, highlighting how even some working-class students retained some cultural capital which was useful for finding information about future options:

> ***Interviewer**: Whereabouts did you look for the information?*
>
> ***Ajeet**: There was one for engineering at Heathrow Airport where you get apprenticeship and they pay you for it (okay). I'm uhh looking, I think I got this phone number somewhere, I must just go and give them a bell, asking you know (mm), you know, ask for information about it and all that.*

***Interviewer**: How did you find out about that apprenticeship?*

***Ajeet**: Newspaper. An advert in there.*

***Simran:** In the summer I used to join a summer University in Isleworth (yeah) and you get to perform, I worked there for 2 weeks last summer, and you get to perform in front off like 400 people. 400 people for the first show, and then 500 people for the second show and it was good, it was just like volunteers and stuff but it was like got loads of roles and stuff and it was kinda good.*

Both Ajeet and Simran were proactive to an extent, finding out about work experience and alternatives to FE. The information that Ajeet had about the apprenticeship was elementary; 'where you get apprenticeship and they pay you for it'. He thought he had this phone number 'somewhere', showing a lack of importance that he placed upon finding out more knowledge. However, 'must' indicated that he was planning to give them a phone call asking for information. Interestingly, Simran, despite being working-class, organised work experience for herself without her parents' knowledge. Such an experience, where she had a range of roles including acting, was seen as a suitable risk to take since she gained so much, particularly considering how female roles were constructed within a cultural framework by her father. Rather than 'fitting' into neat categories, there was a blurring of boundaries in how these students found information for their future aspirations, drawing on

certain aspects which were more associated with the middle-class, and highlighting the heterogeneity of these Sikh young adults' 'becomings', which were intersected by gender.

Nevertheless, most working-class pupils, like Permjeet, did not find information themselves, relying predominantly on social networks for information:

> ***Interviewer**: Have you tried to get any information yourself from other areas apart from uhh talking to other people?*
>
> ***Permjeet**: I don't wanna like get leaflets and everything I wanna talk to someone whose actually done it (mm) cos looking at leaflets, that just gets confusing, don't know what it's really like and (.) I wanna talk to someone who's actually done the thing or one of the teachers that know actually about it (yeah). That could help me a lot.*
>
> ***Interviewer**: Why do you think talking to them would be better than looking at leaflets?*
>
> ***Permjeet**: Because I could ask them questions about it (yeah) and leaflets don't much help, don't have much information and that (yeah). They only give you good points, but sometimes they have bad points (yeah). Uhh (.) they might not be explaining it in detail or anything and might just be like one page cos I*

wanna ask them quite a bit about it (yeah). So I'd really like to talk to someone that's actually done the thing.

'Cold' sources of information were not considered as useful as talking to someone; greater value was placed on the advice of people who had 'done it' or 'teachers that know actually about it' - perceived 'experts' whose voice was given greater authority and credence over leaflets. Permjeet was able to gain a far more rounded perspective from talking to people as he could ask them 'questions about it' compared with leaflets, which only 'sometimes they have bad points' and 'might not be explaining it in detail'. Once again, this served to signify the difference between these working-class young adults and those from the middle-class like Kiran, emphasising how they had different and changing habitus, constructing new 'becomings', which had an impact upon the forms of capital they found useful and drew upon.

5.43 Working-Class Young Adults and Symbolic Capital

Just as with their middle-class counterparts, these young adults, when making future decisions, were concerned with 'how it would look' which was framed within a culturally positioned 'community/ extended family' theme. As stated earlier, there has to be greater acknowledgement of these cultural nuances in educational policy since they had such a significant impact upon future aspirations. This symbolic capital could be gained or lost, in part, through what the choices young adults made, and could have an impact upon the status of their family in the community. Consequently, 'prestigious' and 'traditional' options were considered as enhancing 'izzat' whereas those

that did not meet this standard could potentially reduce it. In this way, the dynamics of symbolic capital helped to emphasise how the habitus of parents and young adults were not always dissimilar:

> ***Interviewer****: So have they pushed you to go to university at all?*
>
> ***Jaswinder****: Nah they don't, you know you have like uhh emotional conversation, in like the emotional conversation we've talked about university innit (yeah). And like my whole family is like "yeah, I hope my son goes to uni, what not" you know, but I've let them down, you know you let them down innit if you don't go innit (yeah) so obviously you think to yourself "come on, my poor family, at least make them happy innit", you know go out and do it innit (yeah) so that's why I was thinking about it as well.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *What things do you think your parents find important in a good job?*
>
> ***Simran:*** *– Uhh (.) money, that's it, haha. Yeah, my parents don't stop going on about money.*
>
> ***Ajeet:*** *–I mean look, I mean like my other cousins and my mum's cousin's daughter, they uhh, they're doing pretty good, really good, but they went into private school innit (yeah) and they getting' like you*

know, they doing uhh proper pharmical studies and they doing proper you know, they're gonna get their degrees and that's it. They're doing wicked and us boys have done like jack.

These students all stressed different aspects of 'how it would look' on others. Jaswinder's account focused on his immediate family and how he had let them down with his poor academic record. Studying at university would give his family symbolic capital as they would be able to say 'my son goes to uni'. For Simran, money was an important consideration in making future choices. As such, her 'parents don't stop going on about money' emphasising how it was their primary concern, above all else; having a financially rewarding job would provide her parents with something tangible to 'show' the community. Ajeet, similar to the middle-class young adults, made greater comparisons between himself and other family members. Girls were constructed as being good students as they were doing 'really good' and 'proper' things, such as 'pharmical studies' and getting 'their degrees'; the implication being that Ajeet was not a good student since he did not achieve as highly as they did. Therefore, education, for these students, would allow them to gain symbolic capital within the local community, which they had not had previous access to and, although their habitus was shifting, these young adults still shared aspects of their habitus with their parents, conveying the importance of context. However, considering that these students were constructed against the ideal in educational policy, they had not been given sufficient careers advice, and were performing poorly in their academic work, it was unlikely that they would be able to realise these aspirations.

5.44 THE IMPORTANCE OF SYMBOLIC CAPITAL FOR CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER

Constructions of gender were certainly tied in with symbolic capital for all students and were culturally located, linked to 'izzat', and found in some research I explored in Chapter One (Thornley and Siann, 1991; Wade and Souter, 1992; Basit, 1997; Ghuman, 2001; Haw, 1994). Multi-layered and interlinking with each other, such forms of identity were important, acting as a form of structure and conveying how individuals were positioned differently within the diaspora space. Once again, the importance for a more focused and targeted approach to raising aspirations and widening participation needs to be created, taking into account an understanding of these significant nuances of culture.

However, compared with this earlier research, gender, for all students, was no longer seen as something that inhibited choices; girls were able to choose anything they so wanted:

> ***Amarpreet****: I dunno I mean people feel that womans can't do the job which men can do (yeah) but that was ages ago but now people, some people do feel that I mean as I told you erm (.) for football for example people think womans can't play football (mm) but they can.*
>
> ***Harjinder:*** *Some, yeah I think it [sexism] is a big problem (mm) cos some people don't think that some, women can't do this, can't do that (yeah), I don't think it's right.*

Both Amarpreet and Harjinder positioned themselves in opposition to others, highlighting how they were different and against such constructions of women. Issues concerning sexism were constructed differently here and did not vary according to the social class of the young men. For Amarpreet, such things happened 'ages ago' although, later, like Harjinder, acknowledged that it was still a 'big problem'. Although Amarpreet gives an explicit example of football, other students gave other examples of what women were not able to do:

> ***Jaswinder****: In a way, it's like uhh good sexism cos like, it's like (.) where I'm working at the moment in Isleworth, we don't get the girls to do (.) like uhh the broom or filling up the drinks in the fridges or anything like that (mm). Cos it doesn't look nice innit.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *You said the girls don't fill up the cupboards and all that. Do you think it's because they can't do it or?//*
>
> ***Jaswinder:*** *No they can do it. It's just the fact that, it don't look nice, it don't look nice (mm). Even in like, if it's like a family business, you don't want your girls you know coming into the shop (.), you know, filling up drinks and that innit. It don't look nice innit (yeah), it's like you don't mind boys doing it cos like, you know, it's a easy job, it's a easier job for us lot innit to do it cos then you know we know where everything is*

what not (yeah). You know the girls would rather just stand the till, do the till innit (mm).

Alternatively, sexism, for Jaswinder, was constructed 'positively' since girls were not allowed to do physical work such as 'filling up the drinks in the fridges' even though they were able to. Using a wider community theme, which was located within a cultural framework, he placed great emphasis on how such jobs 'don't look nice' for 'your girls', the implication here being that girls from Asian/Indian/Sikh families should not be doing such work. Such an idea linked in with notions of symbolic capital; since it was a 'family business', having girls do physical work could have a negative impact upon how the family was considered in the wider community. He used a range of markers to justify his position, including emphasising physical differences ('it's an easier job' for boys to do), how it is easier for them ('we know where everything is'), and what girls would prefer to do ('just stand the till'). In this way, Jaswinder was also constructing his masculinity; he was stronger and able to do the physical work whereas women found such jobs harder.

The idea of 'not looking right' was also prevalent in Ravinder's extract:

***Interviewer**: Do you think with uhh magic there would be any differences if you were a girl?*

***Ravinder:** I don't, cos as being a Sikh, if a Sikh girl wanted to do magic, I don't know if the family would like that you know, depending on. Cos you know it's not what I think, it wouldn't suit the Indian girl to do that (yeah) because it doesn't look right. Erm (.), it looks better if a, if a bloke does it you know, it's more mystifying kind of, mystifying look depending you know (mm), that's it really.*

Interviewer: *– Why do you think it wouldn't look right for a girl?*

Ravinder: *Erm (.), cos you know you don't really see that, you just don't see a girl usually doing that street kind of magic stuff (mm) that's why. The only thing I would only see a woman in magic doing is probably the assistant kind of stuff on stage and things like that (mm), that's the only thing. Umm (.), otherwise it just doesn't look right cos (.), it's the, it's the look, it just doesn't suit them that's why (okay).*

Much like Jaswinder, Ravinder based his account within a cultural framework, where girls could not perform certain jobs. He justified his position through using a range of markers, shifting the blame to others and presenting 'face'. So, he 'doesn't know if the family would like' a Sikh girl to become a magician and stated how 'it's not what *I think'.* This was a position he agreed with as he continued by saying 'it wouldn't *suit* the Indian girl' as magic needed more of 'a mystifying look' which men possessed. He continued to justify his position by declaring 'you just don't see a girl usually doing that street kind of magic stuff' and 'it's the *look*, it just doesn't suit them'. For both Ravinder and Jaswinder, although they argued against sexism, women were not able to do certain occupations which were constrained by cultural and religious boundaries. Thus, gender was a key site for how symbolic capital could be lost and gained in the local community; young women had to uphold cultural values in terms of their behaviour or

else symbolic capital could be lost, whereas such restrictions were far less stringent for young men who had greater autonomy.

Both girls in this sample, Kiran and Simran, considered issues of gender in different ways, emphasising how their 'becomings' varied from those of young men:

> ***Interviewer:*** *What about with uhh, do you think there could be any problems with sexism?*
>
> ***Simran:*** *Erm (.), I don't know, never thought about it actually. I've seen plays and there are girls who are in them and in films and things like that but I don't know but I don't think that'll happen, not now. It used to happen before but not now anymore. I don't think so.*

> ***Interviewer:*** *Do you think you could have any problems because as you were saying beforehand, you're a girl?*
>
> ***Kiran:*** *Uhh, I have been told that people in their actual business don't take much notice of females and they like (.) disregard them whatever like, cos I want to eventually, I want to hopefully a barrister (yeah) and then female barristers, I know there aren't many of them and then I thought after you [inaudible] I just have to (.) do my best and show them that it doesn't matter.*

Interviewer: *Umm, do you think there's any other types of jobs or courses may be, that you might not be able to do because of your gender?*

Kiran: *There's, there's things, I don't really want to do them but I know things like mechanics and [inaudible]. A friend of mine, she wanted to do that (mm), she wanted to be a car mechanic but that she was told by her mum or whatever that they were, you know you won't do well because you're a girl.*

Similar to Amarpreet, sexism for Simran was something 'that used to happen before but not now anymore', emphasising that she was not constrained with what she could do in the future, something her father did not think as shown below. Alternatively, Kiran realised that there are not many female barristers and that sexism could be a problem. Rather than accepting the status quo, she wished to challenge it, much like stereotypical views of Asian girls within her own family, and aimed to 'show them that it doesn't matter' that she was female. However, certain physical occupations for her, linking in with Jaswinder's extract, were seen as taboo for females. Her friend, who wanted to be a mechanic, was discouraged by her mother who saw her gender as a hindrance in this profession where physical strength was important. As such, the young adults' 'becomings' were located within a cultural framework where certain constructions of women remained, but where there had been changes and 'izzat' did not have as much of an impact as it could have done on their future aspirations.

For parents', 'izzat' was still important for females and was predominantly constructed in notions of safety and respect:

> ***Kiran's Mother:*** *Well, ideally, uhh I'd like her not to do Criminal Law, I don't think that's safe for her, but anything else she can do.*
>
> ***Ravinder's Mother:*** *No, I don't think we'd let his sister do magic on streets, it's just not very safe. He's a boy and with his friends so it's ok for him.*
>
> ***Simran's Father:*** *She can't do acting, and that's it. What would uhh people say?! 'Look at them, their daughter wants to be on Eastenders!'*

For Ravinder and Kiran's mothers, notions of safety were evident which limited their children's options. Kiran was allowed to study anything she chose apart from Criminal Law, perceived as containing a physical threat, and street magic, for Ravinder's younger sister, was not an option as she was female. The notions of safety and risk contrasted with literature reviewed in Chapter One, which found parents did not encourage daughters to apply for careers which could compromise 'izzat' (e.g. Thornley and Siann, 1991; Ghuman, 2002). Since Ravinder was a 'boy', and 'with his friends', street magic was not considered as dangerous; both mothers perpetuating the idea that females were physically weaker than men. On the other hand, Simran's father demonstrated incredulity in his extract. Acting, for his daughter, was not an option at all; 'can't do it' and 'that's it' stressed the finality of his decision - his daughter, or wife, not allowed a voice to express their opinion. Such a decision was constructed alongside the notion of losing respect within

the community, highlighting how ‘izzat’ was not applied in a homogenous manner by different Asian families (Dale et al, 2002). Here the community had symbolic power and what they thought was far more important than his daughter’s choices, and he constructed the scorn that they would convey with ‘their daughter wants to be on Eastenders!’. The symbolic capital ‘izzat’ brought to the family was far more important for parents and young men than for young women. Losing ‘izzat’ could result in a loss of status and cultural ‘respectability’ (Skeggs, 1997, 2004) for the family and for the young men within the community, whereas for young women ‘izzat’ was constructed as something that was ‘stupid’, an archaic tradition that did not have a place in society today. Such restrictions were not in place for young men, who had greater autonomy over what they could do as Ravinder’s mother above points out, and tied in with other similar findings (Jeffrey, 1979; Mandelbaum 1990).

Thus, constructions of gender were complex and constructed differently by various students and parents when considering aspirations and future options, with a range of constructions evident, both social and cultural; men and women were positioned differently within the diaspora space and constructions of gender intersected social class and ethnicity. There were intergenerational differences with such constructions, highlighting how the ‘becomings’ and habitus of young adults were shifting as compared with their parents, and intra-differences between parents, emphasising how they were not a homogeneous group. If AimHigher was to be as effective as possible, these complex constructions and cultural nuances, which had such an

intricate impact upon how future aspirations and choices can be structured and constrained for young men and women, had to be accounted for.

5.45 The Role of Teachers in the Future Decisions of Working-Class Young Adults

The AimHigher programme stressed the importance of the role of teachers. Through continually updating their skills, they were given a pivotal role, functioning as a form of guidance and information for young adults. However, at this school, the relationship between teachers and these working-class pupils was interesting, in part shaped by changes which were happening at the school, including the high turnover of staff and the low teacher retention. A consequence was that teachers had a lack of knowledge about young adults, especially if they constructed students in-between those who stood out, the exceptionally bright, and those that were 'loud'. In addition, they did not have much contact with these young adults' parents and, consequently, there was a discrepancy between widening participation policy, where the issue of nurturing strong partnerships in the long-term between those involved in young adults' aspirations was seen as crucial for success, and current practice within the school which was partly influenced by poor teacher retention which could have an impact upon how young adults were chosen:

> ***Mr Weaver (Ajeet and Manjinder's personal tutor):***
>
> *Well it's quite hard you know to get to know them. (.) Both boys are quiet, you've seen them during registration. They sit there, uhh, don't say much and then I get caught up with erm the boys at the back,*

shouting and the usual. Don't always have a chance to speak to them and find out about them, just the odd bits from other teachers.

Miss Ashley (Jaswinder, Harjinder and Ravinder's tutor): *Well it's easier to know about Jaswinder but it's usually cos he's in trouble for something or other. Erm, the other two, well they doing well apparently, they not getting into any trouble, so unfortunately, I don't get a chance to learn as much about what they want to do next year. With Ravinder, I'm sure it's something to do with his magic though, he's very talented and keen on it.*

Both teachers had difficulties learning about their pupils' future plans and demonstrated regret that they were not able to find out more about their pupils. For Mr Weaver, it 'was quite hard to get to know' his pupils; Miss Ashley found it regrettable that she could not 'learn as much about them' as she would have liked. Ajeet and Manjinder were 'quiet' during registration rendering them invisible when other pupils were disruptive. Jaswinder was one of the disruptive pupils who was usually in 'trouble for something or other' resulting in Miss Ashley's focusing on this, rather than his academic record and future choices. Similar to Ajeet and Manjinder, Harjinder was rendered invisible since he did not get 'into any trouble'. However, Ravinder's talent with magic gave him greater visibility with his tutor who acknowledged that 'he's [Ravinder] very talented' and was likely to continue to perform next year.

Other barriers to learning about pupils concerned the structure in the school. Just as with the middle-class pupils, the high turnover of staff resulted in tutors not being in control over a tutor group for long. Consequently, they did not have much knowledge about their pupils and did not have much of a relationship with parents, contrary to AimHigher which stressed the importance of nurturing strong relationships with parents:

> ***Mr Pleat (Jagjit's tutor):*** *Well he [Jagjit] used to speak very enthusiastically about his music (mm), I believe he was a guitar player or something. I know from speaking to his music teacher he was very gifted (yeah) and he did say he'd like to go into that kind of area (mm) but I was, I was encouraging him to uhh, not to ignore his academic studies as well (mm), so I was encouraging him not to uhh focus just on that but to do music and something a bit more academic.*

Despite not knowing much about Jagjit, Mr Pleat had tried to find out about some of Jagjit's interests for the future and tried to offer him some advice. As such, he knew that Jagjit was 'very gifted', he was 'encouraging' and did not want Jagjit to 'ignore his academic studies'. Mr Pleat did find the structure in the school limiting and therefore, the repetition of 'I' shows how the onus was on him to find out about Jagjit and procedures, currently present within the school, were lacking:

> ***Interviewer****: So how much would teachers know about individual pupil's career and educational aspirations?*
>
> ***Mr Pleat:*** *Relatively little to be honest with the structures here at the moment (mm). I've been to a couple of schools*

where they've got folders for each of the children, that's built up over the five years, but uhh (.) there wasn't really anything like that here. I haven't even had a chance to speak with his parents.

Mr Pleat, new to the school, was able to make comparisons with other schools where he had taught. In this school, teachers would know 'relatively little' about individual pupil's aspirations. Other schools had 'folders for each of the children', which had information about them for 'five years', and therefore, this made it easier for teachers to learn, and help, young adults with their future decisions. Since 'there wasn't really anything like that here' stressed Mr Pleat's despondency with the current system and the sense of helplessness he felt, compounded by how he had not had a chance to speak to Jagjit's parents, signalling the fractured relationship between them, as opposed to educational policy where this relationship had to be developed.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Miss Singh, a female Sikh tutor in the school. However, she had greater knowledge of reasons why parents did not attend school, realising that cultural factors could have a considerable part to play, similar to other research on Asian parents that I explored in the first chapter (e.g. Basit, 1996, 1997; Bhatti, 1999):

Interviewer: *So why do you think parents don't come here?*

Miss Singh: *They [parents] are afraid of what will happen, they don't know what to expect (yeah), think that we'll grill them about their kids. We've tried*

different things but nothing works unless their kids are in trouble, they come in then otherwise uhh they just leave it up to us, (.) something they used to do in India (yeah). But you have to remember that most of them struggle with English as well, so it's hard for them, was the same for my parents.

Miss Singh was able to construct an identity where she was identified with the school, but, simultaneously, she was able to draw on personal experiences ('same for my parents') to show she also had knowledge of cultural nuances which were important for explaining parent's roles. Miss Singh emphasised how parents played a 'non-interventionist' role in their children's education, stressing how 'they just leave it up to us' and how they are 'afraid of what will happen', constructing teachers as more powerful and parents as not 'fitting in' within the education context. However, this was located within a cultural framework; it was 'something they used to do in India' and highlighted how their habitus was not able to transform when placed in a new environment. The stability in parent's habitus was further exemplified by their language struggles, which made it 'hard for them' to understand, and conveyed their lack of cultural capital to interact in the 'right' way at school, and, despite having 'tried different things', 'nothing works' unless their children were in trouble. Such findings were important for government policy, which despite seeking to incorporate parents more into the future decision-making process, neglected how social and personal characteristics and identities could have an important impact on if, and how, they participated and interacted with the school. A more targeted approach

was required with a greater understanding of cultural issues to encourage greater parental participation within schools rather than simply positioning them against the middle-class ideal.

Furthermore, when discussing young adult's future aspirations, Miss Singh advocated new ideas, highlighting how her habitus had also shifted, which allowed her to construct new 'becomings' position for herself.

> ***Interviewer:*** *So (.) what do you think these young adults should uhh do in the future?*
>
> ***Miss Singh:*** *They need to leave here for a start! Erm they should be getting outta here, pushing themselves, I fear too many are happy with being at home, happy going along with things when they should be moving away when they go to university (yeah) if they wanna experience it properly (yeah).*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Why do you think moving away is so important?*
>
> ***Miss Singh:*** *Well if they want things to change they should otherwise what happens is things stay the same. I mean it was a struggle for me to go university, much harder back then with more stereotypical ideas of what I should do, but I managed so so can they (yeah).*

Miss Singh sought to challenge the status quo in her account. Currently, young adults were not challenged enough at home, and, thus, were 'happy'. The 'unsaid' here was that young adults were constructing forms of identities

similar to their parents; it was only through ‘moving away’ that their habitus could transform, allowing newer forms of identity to develop. Once again, Miss Singh conveyed she was ‘an insider’, by discussing how she had been through similar experiences which were harder because she had studied, and now taught, a ‘non-traditional’ subject. The issue of gender was important here; following such an educational and occupational route could have resulted in a loss of ‘izzat’ and symbolic capital for the family in the local community, stressing how forms of identity were tied to future choices. However, this could be overcome and, since she was now a teacher, an ‘expert’ and in a position of ‘respect’ within the community, her habitus had transformed and she was now positioned differently in the diaspora space.

The role of teachers in the construction of young adults’ future choices, then, did not ‘fit in’ with government policy. A lack of knowledge about what students aspired to do, coupled with a being relatively new to the school, meant that many teachers had not had the opportunity to form relationships with young adults and their parents, contrary to government policy. Furthermore, although ignored in policy, nuances of culture were important, helping to explain why these parents had lower rates of participation, which Miss Singh was able to offer some interesting insights on through her position as both a Sikh, and a teacher.

5.5 YOUNG ADULTS, FUTURE CHOICES AND RACISM

This section of the chapter explores how racism had a role to play upon the construction of choices. Racism was not included in widening participation discourse and issues concerning racism were evident here, although not as greatly as I had envisaged at the onset of the research. It functioned as a form of structure for some students, both working- and middle-class, some of whom considered it important, others not so:

> ***Interviewer:*** *Do you think there could be any problems in law uhh to do with racism?*
>
> ***Kiran:*** *There probably will be. But I'll just have to put up with it.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Yeah. Why do you (.) think that'd be the case?*
>
> ***Kiran:*** *Cos I haven't heard of many Asian females barrister and things. I know it's most like cos it is a white country sort of and there'd be just mainly white people so there wouldn't be that many Indians.*

> ***Interviewer****: Do you think there could be any problems with racism in magic then?*
>
> ***Ravinder:*** *You know what umm before I do magic like for white people, black people, they do look at me in a funny way but then when I start it, they're like shocked, amazed, they respect me so much it's unbelievable (mm). I've noticed it, I've done it to like you know friends of friends,*

relations you know, they're amazed after, respect me so much (mm) so that's what I like about it.

Compared with research that has found racism to be prevalent for ethnic minorities in education and in their occupations (e.g. Tyrer and Shain, 2006; Basit, 1997; Thornley and Siann, 1991), racism, for Kiran, was constructed in terms of a dearth of ethnic minorities; since there 'wouldn't be that many Indians', racism, along with sexism, was likely to be more prevalent. The role of women was once again important, emphasising how racism was multi-layered, intersecting and interweaving other social conditions like gender and social class. Rather than being an obstacle, she considered it as something she would have to deal with and overcome. Alternatively, Ravinder saw his talent as surmounting racism. People 'look at me in a funny way' but this changes when he begins his act as 'they're shocked, amazed, they respect me so much it's unbelievable'. Although different from the women in Skeggs' (1997, 2004) study, the 'respect' gained here was a method of enhancing symbolic capital not only within the local community, but also wider, in the diaspora space.

Predominant in many students' accounts 'was owning their own business' to counteract any racism:

***Interviewer**: Do you think in any of the jobs we just talked about that there could be any racism?*

***Jagjit**: But, in umm, in business, well if I'm starting my own business I'm uhh, no problems cos I'll be like*

the, I'll be the owner so (yeah), anyone who's racist with me I can just fire them (yeah).

***Interviewer**: Do you think there's any chance of racism when running your own business?*

***Jaswinder**: Nah, not really cos I've worked at uhh (.) my uncles store in Isleworth (mm), never had anyone racist come in there, never, and this one I been to, that my dad just bought (yeah) all of them are so polite (yeah). He always finds a polite area wherever he goes. (.) So I don't think they'll be anyone racist 'round there.*

***Interviewer**: Do you ever think that [racism] could happen when you get a job?*

***Permjeet**: If I owned my own shop, I probably wouldn't own it like in that kind of area probably own it in Southall or something (yeah) where everyone's like, into the same space and that so it's okay.*

Such accounts were simplistic in form; racism was seen as easily prevented and eliminated through greater control. Jagjit took a firm stance against racism, highlighting how having his own business allowed him to manage potential problems. Jaswinder and Permjeet, alternatively, constructed racism and business in terms of the locality of the company. Both their fathers had businesses in contrasting areas, Jaswinder's, in a 'polite area', and Permjeet,

in ‘that kind of area’, indicating that it had higher visible racism. Thus, racism was constructed as something more prevalent in particular areas and could be avoided if the business was in an area, as Permjeet says, ‘where everyone's like, into the same space’, where there was greater ethnic mixing which could impact upon how people were positioned within the diaspora space.

However, for parents, racism was also located within past experiences rather than solely the present:

> ***Permjeet’s Father:*** *Uhh it’s hard you know (.). I have my own shop and see things uhh every week. Most of time swearing, sometimes more. He [Permjeet] has to know he will erm hard, it hard, because it’s like that everywhere.*
>
> ***Amarpreet’s Father:*** *I came here nearly 20 years ago and I did fine and (.) it was so hard then, much harder. Now, erm not so bad. If he [Amarpreet] works hard, he can do well. (.) Doesn’t matter what people do or say (mm).*

Both fathers constructed racism in terms of their personal experiences. For Permjeet’s father, instances of overt racism, from minor cases, where there is just ‘swearing’, to ‘sometimes more’, conveyed how it was ‘hard’ for everyone; for him, racism was prevalent everywhere and it was something his son would have to negotiate. Similar to Permjeet’s father, Amarpreet’s father located racism through his own experiences, yet saw it as something that could be overcome. Despite it being ‘much harder’ when he arrived here,

Amarpreet's father 'did fine' and successfully built up his own business, surmounting any problems. As such, racism was not seen as an encumbrance; through hard work, his son would do well regardless of what other 'people do or say'. Consequently, although racism was constructed differently by different young adults and their parents, it was not seen as impeding their choices for a certain career; racism was accepted, or considered as a challenge, in a future career.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter investigated the research question and aims concerning the educational and occupational aspirations of Sikh young adults. I explored how students constructed future educational and occupational aspirations and choices, how young adults were structured by educational policy, as well as how structures from their habitus and identities, had an impact upon the aspirations and future choices they were able to construct.

Firstly, I explored how GCSE subjects were constructed as it was a process that young adults had previously been through, highlighting how such choices were very much based at the individual level, compared with teachers who encouraged making a 'rational' and 'informed' decision through providing as much information as possible. Next, I explored how the three middle-class pupils in this study constructed their future choices finding they were not all positioned equally within educational policies due to their varying habitus; in part because of their parents' area of origin, and, thus, they had access to different resources that they were able to draw upon when

constructing their future decisions. Despite them drawing heavily on their social networks, Amarpreet, whose parents were from India, had a lack of transferable cultural capital compared with the other two middle-class students and he did share some characteristics associated with the working-class. Symbolic capital was also especially important; academic achievement, or failure, could lead to gaining or losing symbolic capital in the local community as could some 'non-traditional' choices. However, the heterogeneity of these middle-class students served to highlight how their 'becomings' were taking different pathways, positioned alongside, and against, different points of reference within the diaspora space. Aspirations for these students were also linked with 'long-term plans', which fitted in with other research on the middle-class (e.g. Vincent, 2001; Brown and Hesketh, 2004), compared with working-class students whose aspirations were located in the short-term, often hinging on GCSE grades.

The second part of the chapter examined how for working-class students the same structures had an impact upon their aspirations and choices. These students were more likely to be positioned against the middle-class ideal in policy for not demonstrating the 'correct' form of habitus or capital in order to be successful academically and were not given sufficient guidance and information. Consequently, as compared with the middle-class, they were in a state of uncertainty as to their future aspirations, focusing on short-term goals, rather than long-term planning.

Both working- and middle-class young adults were not homogenous in how they used information; rather than positioning themselves in simple dichotomies, there was at times a blurring of boundaries, and hence, of resources that they drew upon in their decision-making processes. Although they did fit in with previous research on the topic, which has found the working-class to be more reliant on their social networks (Ball and Vincent, 1998), some working-class students and parents demonstrated forms of cultural capital, searching for information themselves, even though they did not find it as useful as their social networks. Symbolic capital was also prevalent in the extracts of the working-class young adults. However, compared with middle-class students, there was greater emphasis on gender, and how certain choices would 'look' in the local community and, as explored in the previous chapter, constructions of certain forms of identity were important for young adult's future options.

The role of teachers in future aspirations was difficult to explore considering recent developments at the school which had seen a number of new staff who had little knowledge or information about their students. However, teachers had more information on some students than others, primarily based on their 'visibility', particularly Ravinder and his magic. Furthermore, there was little link between parents and teachers; parents, of all social classes, although attending school events like Parents' Evening, were content to stay out of the school unless their child was in 'trouble'. The teacher was seen frequently as 'expert' by parents and their advice uncritically accepted. Cultural issues linking in with parent's own educational

experiences were important here as highlighted by Miss Singh – parents did not approach the teacher in India unless there was a problem with their child. This contrasts with other research on middle-class parents (e.g. Crozier, 2000), which has found such parents to be far more proactive in approaching the school over any concerns. Furthermore, there was little connection between students and teachers. Students were far more likely to rely upon their social networks for information than approach teachers, and frequently forgot information from school events. Consequently, clusters of young adults, parents and teachers can be seen to be fragmented in the construction of aspirations in this study.

Finally, I explored the theme of racism, which was not as prevalent as I had initially considered at the onset of the research. However, racism was constructed as something to be overcome by some young adults, a challenge, rather than as an obstacle to achieving highly or future aspirations. Interestingly, having a 'business' was prevalent in their extracts; a strategy for avoiding racism as young adults would have greater agency and therefore control over how their business functioned. This was similar to some parents, whose personal experiences of racism were tied in with their migration to the country which were overcome through hard work, emphasising how young adult's habitus did still share some similarities with those of their parents.

The final chapter is the conclusion where I return to the research question and research aims of this study and claims of originality of this thesis, before exploring some limitations and potential areas for future research.

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

The final chapter of this thesis begins with a summary of the AimHigher programme which was introduced while this study was conducted. The following section examines the research question and aims of this study and how findings contrasted with the assumptions and proposals inherent within the AimHigher programme. In the final two sections, I reflect upon my study, including some limitations and possible future research before ending this thesis with some recommendations which can be made for educational policy.

6.1 SUMMARY OF THE AIMHIGHER PROGRAMME

Aspirations, in New Labour educational policies were defined in terms of 'fairness' and 'equality' and the AimHigher programme was a fundamental part of their widening participation policy when this study was conducted in the early 2000s, forming an integral part of the government's social justice and economic agenda. Increasing the qualifications of the future workforce was considered as a method for ensuring the UK remained globally competitive and, as such, there was a need to increase the proportion of young adults entering Higher Education to 50 per cent. Increasing the proportion from 'non-traditional groups', including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and minority groups, the results could be two-fold – the economic concerns could be tackled whilst demonstrating a commitment to social justice and the under-representation of these groups in HE. As I

have explored throughout this thesis, this policy had a significant impact upon the aspirations of young adults, structuring the options which were available to them, and constructing identities for them and their parents.

Notions of widening participation have developed over a number of years since the publication of the Kennedy and Dearing reports in 1997 which established the importance of the scheme. AimHigher was initially launched as the 'Excellence Challenge' in 2001 in several areas around the UK to ensure young adults from 'non-traditional' backgrounds considered Higher Education a viable option. The seminal paper 'Widening Participation in Higher Education' (DfES, 2003) further outlined the actions the New Labour government planned to take and, in 2004, the scheme was integrated with a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Learning Skills Council (LSC) initiative called 'Partnerships for Progression' to become the unified 'AimHigher' programme which ran nationwide. Partnerships were intrinsic for AimHigher, working through nine regional partnerships and 45 area partnerships across England, consisting of various interested parties in young adults' futures including representatives

One of the primary focuses of the scheme was to address imbalances in Higher Educational participation from those from groups that had traditionally been underrepresented. Two principal groups of young adults were targeted in the programme. The first consisted of young adults aged between 13-19, who had the potential to enter, but no previous family history of, HE. The second group identified those who were 'gifted and talented', achieving above the average for their age group, both academically and in extra-

curricular activities, ensuring their ability was nurtured. There was a focus on those from lower socio-economic and minority ethnic groups and addressing barriers these students encountered, both cultural and environmental, which could be reinforced by family and peers, school, and members of the local community.

To improve these imbalances, four principal areas were targeted: attainment, aspiration, application and admissions. There was an acknowledgment with the first target that raising standards was a key aspect for widening participation and a number of attainment-raising activities were introduced, including mentoring schemes and study groups. The second target, tying in with the first, was to raise young adults' aspirations, showing them that university was a place 'for them', and encouraging them to apply. A range of activities were again introduced to provide them with more information and knowledge, including university visits and student talks. The third area and fourth targets focused on HE applications and admissions, and there was a greater emphasis on encouraging institutions to reach out more to students and to ensure that admissions policies operated fairly. To help meet these targets, a range of government incentives were introduced which included financial help with tuition fees for those from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds and increasing the income threshold at which students had to repay their university loans. Further measures for widening participation included introducing new courses in FE, such as increased vocational courses, and greater work-based foundation degrees.

This policy was built on the assumption that a positive, linear relationship exists between education and economic growth where participating in HE will lead to a higher paid occupation. Such a relationship has been described as tenuous at best (Wolf, 2002) and this assumption oversimplifies the process, ignoring the complexities in the barriers which have an impact upon 'non-traditional' groups who are under-represented in HE. There was little consensus as to what criteria should be employed when choosing young adults for the AimHigher programme, with the processes for identifying students from lower socio-economic backgrounds varying from official National Statistics (NS-SEC) categories, to the post-codes of potential participants (Archer, 2003; Gorard et al, 2006), and responsibility for selecting participants varying between local partnerships from schools, teachers and Higher Education Institutions (McCaig and Bowers-Brown, 2007). These different practices increased the difficulty in measuring and comparing how effectively different schools targeted students and their financial budgets in doing so.

Several other criticism have been levelled at the AimHigher programme including the financial costs of HE (e.g. Archer and Hutchings, 2003) which coerce working-class young adults into less prestigious universities (Archer, 2007), and how it operates within a model where the working-class are implicitly positioned against the middle-class ideal (e.g. Thomas, 2001, Archer and Yamashita, 2003). Here, possessing the 'right' information and motivation is seen as a requisite for constructing a rational choice, which the working-class do not have access to. Such constructions were further

compounded by teachers who were responsible for deciding which students were eligible for selection in the programme. Findings from this study indicated that certain identities, particularly those concerning hegemonic forms of masculinity, were constructed as problematic and against academic work, where 'politeness' and 'good behaviour' were considered more desirable, resulting in some young men less likely to be selected. Thus, at the local level, there was a clash of capitals where different forms of cultural and symbolic capital were valued by students and teachers.

Framing the problem in such as a way serves to reproduce and maintain existing inequalities, where middle-class cultural capital is considered the most valuable and other forms of identity as unsuitable (Gewirtz, 2001). As such, working-class aspirations and their habitus were constructed as needing to be addressed (Bridges, 2005) and there is emphasis on the individual to change (Archer, 2007) thereby absolving the government of responsibility. However, as I demonstrated throughout this study, the assumptions inherent within policy, where individuals were constructed as rational, unemotional and disembodied beings who could make effective aspirations and choices through being provided with the necessary information and support, was found lacking as all young adults were constructed as inadequate when positioned against policy. Even the middle-class students who most closely matched these ideals, possessing greater cultural capital and more informed social networks which they were able to draw upon when forming aspirations, fell short, constrained to some extent by the intersections of capital, cultural nuances and constructions of gender.

6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH AIMS

The above section on AimHigher is important for this study. I was studying Sikh young adults in Britain when this programme was introduced and this group, classified within the 'Asian' population, was considered as having higher educational and occupational aspirations for their children. This section of the final chapter returns to the research question and research aims which formulated this study to examine if they were fulfilled. The principal research question was "What are the educational and occupational aspirations of a small sample of Sikh young adults?' and research aims employed to answer this principal question were to:

1) Explore how educational and occupational aspirations are interrelated?
2) Explore which resources do Sikh parents, young adults, and their teachers draw upon when constructing such aspirations and why are certain resources used over others?
3) Explore how aspirations are constructed within each cluster of parent, teacher and young adult?
4) Shed some light upon how some British-Sikh identities are constructed.
5) Examine the stereotypical view of 'Asian' parents as having unrealistically high aspirations for their children.

To explore these aims, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten young adults, their parents and teachers at one school in West London. The participants' parents had migrated from both India and East Africa, were various castes, with three middle-class students, and the

remaining seven working-class. These students and parents were not positioned equally in educational policies; the heterogeneity of the social classes meant that vertical and horizontal positioning was evident.

As I stated earlier, there was the assumption in AimHigher policy that providing individuals with the requisite support and information could lead to them constructing rational and informed aspirations and choices. However, as I demonstrated throughout this thesis, the realities of these participants did not 'match' both the implicit identities constructed for them in policy, where the habitus of the middle-classes was seen as desirable and the standard to be aimed for, nor the more explicit identities constructed by teachers where certain forms of behaviour, including 'hard work', were considered to be more conducive for academic work. Even middle-class students, who most closely resembled the 'rational' chooser implicitly advocated in policy, and who held long-term aspirations, had different aspects of their identities, positioned and structured within social and cultural frameworks, preventing them from 'fitting' this ideal. Consequently, it can be argued that educational policies constructed an abstract being which did not exist in reality; the intersections of different identities and cultural nuances having a significant impact.

It is here where this study fits in, helping to shed light and making original contributions to knowledge for how this small sample of Sikh young adults constructed their educational and occupational aspirations and the resources they employed in doing so. This study places greater emphasis on

understanding the impact of cultural issues and how the intersections of gender, social class, ethnicity and caste had an impact upon which resources they had access to, and drew upon, in different contexts, when constructing aspirations; a far more complex process than these policies dictated. Bourdieu's notions of habitus, capital and field, alongside cultural identity theories, were considered particularly useful for explaining this.

The social class of students in this sample was one of the most significant issues when constructing aspirations. Other research has criticised how AimHigher and other widening participation policies have constructed the working-class as against the 'desirable' middle-class ideal, where possessing motivation and the right information is seen as requisite for constructing a rational choice (e.g. Thomas, 2001; Archer and Yamashita, 2003). In this study, the habitus of some of the middle-class students, and the capitals they were able to draw upon, meant that they were more likely to bring the 'right' form of resources, as defined by educational policy, for constructing their aspirations and choices compared with working-class young adults who were positioned against this ideal, lacking both cultural and social capital. This structuring by policy and habitus meant that for middle-class students future aspirations were interrelated and constructed in the 'long-term' with Higher Education seen as a definite possibility, as opposed to working-class students who were more likely to construct aspirations in the short-term. For example, Kiran, the one middle-class girl, wanted to be a lawyer and had a definite 'plan' for the future, which included her exact 'A' Levels leading on to university. She was able to draw upon her extensive and relevant capitals far

more effectively, including her parent's social networks and transferable cultural capital since they had knowledge of the education system.

However, social class was intersected by other aspects of identity, including gender and ethnicity and highlighted how not all young adults and parents had access to the same resources. These intersections were important for constructions of future aspirations – the intricacies and complexities of which the AimHigher programme did not focus upon. It allowed a range of resources to be drawn upon in different social and cultural contexts, but could also have a negative impact upon some young adults' academic performance and future routes. So, although Kiran possessed greater cultural capital than other students, more closely matching the 'rational' chooser implicit in AimHigher, her gender came to the fore where cultural constructions of women and 'traditional' women's roles had a significant impact upon which aspirations she was able to construct. Kiran's extended family did not advocate Further and Higher Education for women which could see a loss of 'izzat' or family honour, a form of symbolic capital within the community. Alternatively, although her parents did value education, restrictions were placed on Kiran if a career could jeopardise her safety and if it was not 'prestigious'. Hence, symbolic capital, tied in with cultural constructions of gender, intersected the decision-making process, having an intricate impact. As such, this educational policy constructed an abstract reality for young adults that did not match their realties since gender, social class and ethnicity, along with cultural nuances particular to different groups and their migratory patterns, had a complex impact upon how they constructed

aspirations and which resources they were able to use. Consequently, the AimHigher programme found to be lacking, failing to account for the heterogeneity amongst different groups, such as with the Sikhs in this study; a more targeted approach was required accommodating the importance of cultural and social nuances. For other students, different intersections were significant and Amarpreet, another middle-class student, possessed a lack of cultural capital; his parent's relatively recent arrival to the UK, and their lack of knowledge about the workings of the education system, resulted in a greater reliance on their social networks for information which meant that he also did not 'fit' into constructions of the middle-class.

Alternatively, working-class students 'fitted in' with educational research (e.g. Archer and Yamashita, 2003) which found the working-class were positioned against the middle-class standard. These students were not as certain of the future and there was a greater gulf between their educational and occupational aspirations, suggesting that simply focusing on aspirations at a younger age, such as AimHigher proposed, was not effective and did not transfer to making rational choices in the future. These working-class young adults possessed a lack of cultural capital which meant that they were dependent upon social networks for careers advice, particularly from friends and relatives who had been through similar experiences themselves. Many of their goals were located within the 'short-term', where the notion of 'waiting and seeing' until they received their exam results was prevalent, with a lack of knowledge of future options after their GCSEs. For example, Permjeet's options depended upon how he performed in his exams; if he achieved

highly, he would be able to continue into ‘A’ Levels or else would have to settle for a vocational course. Existing power relations between the social classes are maintained and reproduced through these students studying vocational routes to enter HE, since it is ‘bronze’ or less prestigious universities (Ainley, 2003) which offer these courses and predominantly target these students (Archer, 2007). Thus, there is an increasing, rather than a widening, of participation, which serves to justify the increasingly stratified hierarchy of Higher Education Institutions (Jones and Thomas, 2005).

Findings from this study also emphasised how students could not be neatly placed within a category – some working-class students did demonstrate characteristics associated with the middle-class, while Amarpreet, a middle-class student, had a lack of the ‘right’ cultural capital. The resources young adults employed, including social, cultural and symbolic capitals, which were structured through habitus, highlighted the heterogeneity in social class and ethnic groups. Each student had different levels of cultural capital they could draw upon, highlighting the multifarious forms of habitus, conveying how it can shift and transform according to social and cultural context. Since parents had been educated in either India or East Africa, the cultural capital they possessed was not easily transferable to this country; some of them had a lack of knowledge about the education system here and language difficulties. Thus, although some of them did search for ‘cold knowledge’ (Ball and Vincent, 1998), they were more likely to rely on members of their social networks which were an important source of information, allowing further information to be procured through asking members of their network

questions. Young adults and parents drew upon them in order to organise work experience, knowledge about particular options and to interact with teachers during school events such as Parents' Evening. However, since some middle-class parents were not educated in this country, an added extra, and interesting, dimension was added to this study. The resources that parents used were not exclusive to either the middle- or working-class, but instead there was a blurring of boundaries and resources they relied on, with some parents searching for 'cold knowledge' despite being working-class, highlighting how parents' habitus was dynamic, changing over time, rather than staying static. This was also prevalent for some working-class students who, for example, were able to organise work experience for themselves and search for information themselves.

Different contexts allowed different identities to come the fore which could impact negatively upon the academic success of young adults and these included some constructions of masculinity when young males were with their peers. Some young men constructed themselves in 'hegemonic' forms through performing deviant behaviour, a form of cultural capital which allowed them to acquire symbolic capital within their peer group. Jaswinder was a prime example of this, performing several deviant acts which, although providing him with greater cultural capital amongst peers, saw him positioned against academic success by teachers. Jaswinder was suspended several times for his behaviour and not considered for enrolment into the school's Sixth Form, although he did aspire to FE and HE. Consequently, performances of hegemonic masculinity, whilst allowing him to elevate his

status amongst his peers, reduced his standing with teachers in terms of being selected for the AimHigher programme. As these students demonstrated, there were a number of complex social and cultural barriers which structured how they constructed aspirations and preventing them from reaching this ideal, allowing certain options to be considered, and prohibiting others.

Indeed, cultural issues were a crucial factor in the construction of young adults' aspirations with gender in particular intersecting with social class in the construction of future choices and the opening up and closing down of opportunities. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital was significant here for females. For example, how a particular aspiration for a girl would 'look' in the extended family or community was important to some students and parents, having an impact upon their 'izzat'. Certain future paths which were not considered appropriate for a girl, especially those which could see her safety compromised, were not to be chosen as it could lead to a loss of 'respectability' in the community. Subsequently, choosing certain paths could enhance a family's symbolic capital such as if the career was prestigious, like Law (Kiran for her immediate family), or reduce the capital if the occupation was considered as inferior, such as in entertainment (Ravinder and Simran). For parents, symbolical capital could be tied in with the 'migrant effect' (Mirza, 1992) and how they had migrated to 'better' themselves which, in part, could be achieved through how their children performed at school. If their child did not achieve highly, it could be seen as failure on the part of parents and 'face' (Brown and Levinson, 1987) could be lost in the local

community. However, not all parents and students ascribed to such a view and, at times, parents and students did resist pressures from their extended family, even if their standing in the community could be diminished and symbolic capital could be lost. Alternatively, some working-class parents had low expectations partly because of their children's low academic ability, but also because of their gender, and assigned 'blame' for this failure onto their children emphasising, once again, the intersection of different forms of identity and the heterogeneity of these parents.

The syncretic approach I developed was particularly useful for exploring this, allowing me to locate the local, within broader themes. Various theoretical strands formed a part of this approach, including Bourdieu, the cultural identity theories of Hall and Brah, but also Foucault and discursive psychological theories. Furthermore, Butler and Connell's explanations of gender identity, and Skeggs' notion of 'respectability' were incorporated into my approach, allowing me to pragmatically highlight the various social and cultural resources, and capitals, that individuals drew upon when constructing future aspirations and identities, but also, how these were situated within a broader political and educational context, where government educational policy had an impact upon how identities were constructed, with some favoured, and others rejected. Thus, through adopting such an approach, I was able to explore the AimHigher programme through studying local political manoeuvrings, emphasising the need for more syncretic approaches which seek to produce different forms of knowledge, leading to new forms of action.

Constructions of parents and teachers in the AimHigher programme did not reflect their identities, creating another abstract version of the world, much like it did with young adults, highlighting another discrepancy in policy. An important aspect of the AimHigher initiative was fostering and nurturing strong relationships between teachers, parents and young adults in order to best provide a scaffold for young adults when constructing future aspirations. In this study, there was a distinct lack of this. The recent upheavals in the school, where there had been a greater influx of new teachers, had resulted in them not knowing as much about their students as they would have wanted; most teachers only had limited knowledge about what their students wanted to do and it was harder for them to provide information and guidance to their students. Despite this, positive and negative identities were constructed for students based upon their behaviour in school which had an impact upon how whether they were to be considered for the AimHigher programme.

Parents often did not approach teachers for information themselves and attendance at school events could be sparse. Intersections of social class and ethnicity were important as working-class Sikh parents had less knowledge about the education system, and some had a lack of English and could be overwhelmed. In addition, cultural nuances had a role to play; the teacher was considered as ‘expert’ in India, and was only to be approached if absolutely required. Despite attempts by the school to overcome this through providing parents with information in their native language, parental participation among minority ethnic groups remained low.

Consequently, many parents, particularly those from the working-class, did not speak often to their children's teachers and, instead, the social capital parents possessed was an essential resource for them, where they could not only gain information about future options available for their children, but also use to communicate with teachers. Middle-class parents were able to communicate far more effectively with teachers; since some of them were educated in the UK, they had greater cultural capital they could draw upon. Interestingly, migration patterns again had an impact and not all middle-class parents had greater knowledge about the education system. Amarpreet's parents had been educated in India and, although they understood the education system there, their lack of knowledge about the UK meant that they, like some working-class parents, had to rely upon family members to communicate with teachers for them.

What my study showed was that the ideal created by AimHigher, of teachers, parents and young adults forming a partnership in which aspirations could be formed, was in this case frustrated by many different factors. Since many teachers were new to the school, they did not have much knowledge about their students' aspirations, nor did they have much contact with parents who did not frequent the school often because of the barriers I have already outlined. To be effective, educational policies like AimHigher would have to take account of such realities and how they play a part in the construction of aspirations and the reproduction of systems of inequality and exclusion. There had to be a far greater exploration of the impact of cultural nuances

and how different identities intersected and had a role to play in the construction of aspirations and identities.

The final research aim was to investigate the stereotype of Asian parents as holding unrealistically high aspirations for their children. What I found was that parental aspirations varied – some had high aspirations and this was linked to the 'migrant effect' (Mirza, 1992), where parents migrated to 'better' themselves. Having high aspirations could be considered as a form of symbolic capital within the local community, allowing them a certain standing if their children were aspiring to a more 'prestigious' career.

However, the habitus of parents, and the lack of capitals they possessed, were also significant, intersecting the decision-making process when educational and occupational aspirations were constructed, limiting which options were to be considered. For example, although some working-class parents had high aspirations, these were constrained by the lack of 'right' cultural capital they possessed within the educational field; knowledge of future options was confined to those which were most well-known or routes other relatives' children had taken. Social class was not the only barrier here; Amarpreet's parents, despite being middle-class, did not possess the 'right' cultural capital either so had to rely on their social networks for greater advice and information, highlighting how migratory patterns were still having a significant role to play. Constructions of gender and cultural issues, particularly for females, also intersected how aspirations were constructed by parents. Some parents positioned females within a cultural framework where

'traditional' roles were advocated and, thus, higher aspirations were not seen as desirable. As such, possessing higher aspirations for females could have an impact upon the symbolic and social capitals parents possessed within the local community. Consequently, the assumption in policies such as AimHigher, where providing parents with greater knowledge of future options will help them to construct rational and more appropriate aspirations for their children, is too simple. The stereotype of unrealistically high aspirations was layered with a range of pertinent issues, including the habitus and capitals of parents, their migratory patterns, and cultural nuances, which were intersected by social class and gender, all combining to have an impact upon how educational and occupational aspirations were constructed.

6.3 REFLECTION ON THE STUDY

Although I did reflect on this study in the methodology chapter, it is worth reiterating again in order to explore some potential future areas of research which can build upon the findings from this study.

This study has a number of positives. It has shed light on a previously under-researched topic, highlighting how Sikh young adults construct their future educational and occupational aspirations; explored how gender, social class and caste, along with cultural nuances, can have an impact on these decisions; and the role that parents and teachers can play in the construction of their children's aspirations. In previous studies, Sikhs had often been subsumed under the broader homogeneous category of 'Asian', rendering their intricacies invisible. A novel 'syncretic' constructionist approach was

employed to investigate these issues, drawing heavily on Bourdieu and his notions of habitus, capital and field, along with the cultural identity theories of Brah and Hall, to explain how identities whilst structured, also fluctuate and change, allowing a variety of possibilities for young adults. Notions of reflexivity were also drawn upon to bring greater transparency to the research, allowing me to explore the assumptions I brought to the investigation which impacted upon how I interpreted and analysed participants.

However, there were a number of limitations which open up avenues for future research. The lack of literature on Sikhs meant that I had to heavily rely upon literature on 'Asians' as a whole despite arguing that there were too many differences between various 'Asian' groups. The most important limitations concerned the sample. Although a smaller sample, focusing on cultural nuances and the intersections of identity was required as an alternative to larger quantitative studies which focused on demographics, the sample in this study would have ideally included more participants. A larger sample would have allowed a greater exploration of the themes that developed during this study, concerning how forms of identity are constructed and linked to aspirations. In addition, acquiring more young women would have allowed a greater exploration of femininity in subject-positions and how 'izzat' had a role to play in their future aspirations. I have tried to readdress this by giving female accounts more prominence in my analysis, but it would have been good to have had the participation of more Sikh young women. Indeed, constructions of young British-Sikh women's identity, focusing on

other aspects of their lives, particularly their families and the impact of culture, would be particularly interesting and an area of potential future research.

Other potential research could focus on the relationship between schools/teachers and parents. High teacher turnover at the school resulted in teachers not having much knowledge about their students, including their future aspirations and there is potential for further research to readdress this to explore how well interrelationships and partnerships between the various groups are working and which techniques have been implemented to encourage greater participation from parents.

Moreover, when considering both the construction of identities and future aspirations, it would be fascinating to explore Sikh peer groups and the impact these have on the construction of future aspirations. Current literature exists on other Asian groups such as Muslims (e.g. Archer, 2003), and an exploration of Sikh youth peer groups in 21st century Britain is lacking at present, and there is scope to investigate these issues within the context of current educational policies.

6.4 SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS STUDY

This final section of the thesis explores some recommendations for widening participation which can be made from the findings of this study. If the principal findings from this research are to be taken into account - that there has to be a greater understanding of the cultural nuances of different groups and how various forms of identities intersect, allowing different forms of resources to be used in various social and cultural contexts to construct aspirations – there are several implications for widening participation educational policies. There has to be a greater understanding and inclusion of these issues if policies are to be as effective as possible, matching the commitments to 'fairness' and 'equality' for which they were introduced, and reducing the effect of structural constraints within policy which reinforce inequalities through how certain identities are positioned against academic success.

The first important implication to be made from this study is that generic policies for all students serve to maintain and reinforce existing inequalities, where individuals are blamed for their 'failure' rather than an acknowledgement, and attempt to resolve, wider inequalities in society that create an imbalance in the capitals individuals and families have at their disposal. Indeed, the notion of individual 'failure' is one which concerns not only young adults and their parents, but also teachers, with more recent policies making distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' teachers, increasing the demands on their role. In addition, constructing certain individuals as the 'other' risks alienating them and is not particularly useful when trying to foster

strong relationships between groups. A greater understanding of different ethnic groups' cultures, and how they impact upon aspirations and choices, is required if there is to be a true commitment to social justice, which more recent Higher Education policies have also shirked away from. A consideration of the culture of different ethnic groups would help to explain, for example, why some Sikh parents do not participate in schools and how symbolic capital has such a crucial influence, and act as a spur to introduce new and appropriate methods to remedy this. Some options are to forge closer links between local community groups, more regular contact between the school and parents to ensure a positive and supportive environment is created, and to provide parents with information on the workings of the educational system from the beginning of their child's education. In this way, rather than constructing groups as homogeneous, there is a recognition that a variety of structural barriers exist.

Secondly, the importance of identity construction for aspirations and choices cannot be understated and are complex. Widening participation policies have constructed identities differently, positioning some as more acceptable for Further and Higher Education, such as middle-class identities, whereas other identities, including those concerning hegemonic forms of masculinity, have been constructed by those selecting students for the programme as less suitable. Furthermore, other research on Asians has offered crude, essentialist explanations to describe how young Asian adults are caught between two conflicting cultures (e.g. Ghuman, 1999; Ghuman, 2002) which has a negative effect on young adults (Bhatti, 1999). As this study found, the

construction of identities are fluid, context-based, and are intersected and cross-cut by cultural constructions of social class, gender and ethnicity. For example, how aspirations were constructed for females was complex, intersected and structured by cultural constructions of 'izzat' and how this would 'look' in the wider community, although this was not always a barrier to FE and HE. Simply constructing young adults and their parents in these narrow and homogeneous terms alienates 'non-traditional' groups which widening participation policies are meant to target. An awareness of cultural issues facing different groups would once again be beneficial, helping to create stronger links between teachers and parents, inform how careers advice is administered to young adults, and focus attention on the inequalities in selecting students for the schemes. A greater understanding of these difficulties facing 'non-traditional' students is required which, as demonstrated by Miss Singh in this study, ethnic minority staff have an empathy for. Identities which are positioned against academic success, such as hegemonic forms of masculinity, can be targeted, helping to provide young men with the 'right' forms of cultural and social capital to encourage them to achieve their aspirations which leads on to the next recommendation.

'Hot' knowledge, relying on social networks, was drawn upon heavily by all young adults and parents in this study, regardless of social class, and a further recommendation would be to utilise this when administering advice to young adults about their future options. Current forms of 'hot' knowledge employed by the school, including outsourcing events where young adults were given information, were not effective; they were introduced during Year

9, at the age of 13, and some young men, like Permjeet, used it as an excuse to ‘muck about’. A ‘bottom-up’ approach, with greater input from students, is required from an earlier age to best meet their needs with knowledge provided from more ‘trusted’ sources, including, but not limited to, members of the local community, former students who have been successful in FE and HE, and teachers they were familiar with, so that young adults could gain information on a range of options. Therefore, there is scope to tackle the issue of ‘waiting and seeing’ until students gained their exam results, which many young working-class adults are prone to do, with extra support.

A final point that has to be addressed concerns the government’s widening participation agenda and if it is an appropriate method of dealing with a true commitment to social justice where fairness and equality for all are espoused. Educational policies such as AimHigher emphasise the value of education to overcome poverty and inequalities, where entering HE is considered a solution for dealing with inequalities. However, reforms in tuition fees introduced by New Labour in 1998, further increased over the past decade, are inconsistent with this commitment to social justice. The two-fold aspect of widening participation policies, tying issues of social justice with a free market in education, appear contradictory, particularly with the introduction of tuition fees, which primarily effected those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, coercing them into applying for cheaper vocational courses where loans could be repaid quicker (Forsyth and Furlong, and at less presitigious universities (Reay, 2001; Bowl, 2003), reproducing and maintaining existing inequalities. As such, these programmes can be seen as

‘papering over the cracks’, where the true causes of social justice issues are not addressed.

Although education is one method of tackling injustices in society, it is important to remember that it is just one element and there are a number of other complex issues which have to be challenged in order to bring true social justice. For example, figures suggest that almost 4 million children live in poverty in the UK, a figure of 30 per cent of all children in Britain[21]; a horrendous figure which cannot be solved by widening participation policies alone. Consequently, a true commitment to social justice should address other issues in society, where serious thought is given to implications of social policy across the board which might then also help broaden the educational and occupational aspirations of all young adults.

[21] http://endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/the-effects

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

- How long have you known this particular student?
    - How are they presently doing in their studies?
    - Discussions about future options available to them?
    - Any educational or occupational aspirations?
    - Where they get information?

- Parents of Student?
    - Spoken to student's parents?
    - Any aspirations?

- What does this school provide for giving students information about careers?
    - Careers service at the school?

- There is a stereotypical view of Asian parents that they want high aspirations for their child – what do you think about this?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

- What subjects is your child currently studying?
    - Choices that they are going to make after GCSEs?
    - What they prefer child to do?
    - Many discussions with the child/ spouse?
    - Any disagreements?
    - Realistic and ideal jobs and courses?
    - Positives and negatives of job?
    - Jobs and courses not to do?
    - Any jobs that their child may not be able to do because of their gender?
    - Any alternatives considered?
    - What factors do you think are part of a good career?
    - Any benefits from being a Sikh?

- Have any discussions taken place at school to talk about future choices?
    - What think of advice that is offered/ teachers?
    - Spoken to your child?
    - Other areas sought for information?

- There is a stereotypical view of Asian parents that they want high aspirations for their child – what do you think about this?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR YOUNG ADULTS

- What subjects are you currently studying?
    - Expect to achieve?
    - What hope to do after?
    - How made these choices?
    - Positives and negatives of jobs?
    - Differences because a girl?
    - Anyone who does the job?
    - Alternatives?
    - Ideal job and realistic job?
    - Any advantages of being a Sikh?
    - Jobs and courses that they may not be able to do because of gender?

- Parents – what do your parents think about your choices?
    - Many discussions?
    - Their advice?
    - Their parent's aspirations?
    - Any problems with what you want to do?
    - Where do they get information?

- Teachers – What do you think of the teachers in the school?
    - Discussions with them about future choices?

- Talked to your parents?
- Do you think that they have particular assumptions of you because of who you are?

- Careers Service – do you have lessons on future choices?
    - Arrangements provided in schools about educational and career choices?

- Parents – There is a stereotypical view of Asian parents that they have high aspirations for their children – how do you feel about this?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW WITH JASWINDER

Bikram – Okay, my names uhh Bikram, I'm a PhD student studying the occupational and educational aspirations of Sikh young adults. I just wanna ask you a few questions today about your future decisions. Erm, everything you say is confidential so I can't tell anyone and in the final thesis you will be anonymous. Uhh, before we begin, is there anything you wanna ask me at all (no)? Uhh, which subjects are you studying at the moment?

Jaswinder – Maths, English, Science, German, P.E., Business Studies, R.E. and I.T.

B – How are you doing?

J – I'm alright in most of the subjects but just got to sort out some coursework and that's it (yeah).

B – What do you expect to do next year?

J – Basically, I'm trying to get a good mark in business studies (yeah) so I can uhh get in more knowledge in business and uhh go into business with uhh (.), anyone who'll, make my own business.

B – So next year are you gonna stay on at further education?

J – Next year, well basically, at the moment the teachers have said to me, ‘til my GCSE grades come out, they’ll decide from there if they want to interview me or not. If they come out and they don’t want to interview me, so I’ll have to go to a different college otherwise I'm gonna stay down this college (mm).

B – What would you prefer to do, stay here or go somewhere else?

J – Stay here. I been here for five years, I know everyone now (yeah) and then like you know going to a different school is gonna be long (.). Like a lot of people you know that dislike you, like you, you don’t want to go to another school then start getting into trouble, its just all more headache innit, you go and just stay at one school with all your mates (yeah).

B – If they do accept you here, what are you gonna do then?

J – Basically, I'm gonna try and get a good mark in P.E. as well so I can do Physical Education as an A level and uhh (.), carry on doing business studies and hopefully carry on doing another language as well.

B – Another language (mm)? Which one?

J – Punjabi actually (yeah).

B – Why have they said to you they can only accept you when you get your grades?

J – Cos basically(.), my records are not quite you know good as its supposed to be (okay) cos I've been expelled like about 6 times now (yeah) and these uhh, they, basically people really get on my nerves innit (yeah) and then they immediately go to my temper and then I lose it, then I lose it and that's it innit and then I hit them first and I always get out innit (yeah), and they kicked me out 2 or 3 times. Cos of all of that you know, they're like “we’d rather keep a good student, with good grades” and everything like that innit “ I lookin at your records, if you have bad grades we’re not gonna keep you”, its like that.

B – Umm, how did you make those choices for next year?

J – (.) I dunno its just (.) at the end of Year *9*, think they chose, they asked to choose business studies or I think it was Sociology (yeah), one of each, but I thought I’d choose business studies cos like my cousins and you know my cousin’s girls they all done it as well innit so I thought I might as well go on the same line innit cos then they got good grades and everything in business so I might as well do the same thing (mm). I thought I’d choose business studies and then I chose that, and *P.E.* I just chose cos I love sports innit (yeah), keeping healthy you know, good events and everything. I alright in that as well.

B – Did you speak to any teachers about your choices?

J – Just my tutor, she gives it to me just get good grades.

B – Yeah, what about your parents?

J – Well they know about it innit, they know I've done P.E. cos they, to be honest every time I go home I just lie down on the sofa for about three hours innit (yeah), watch tv, and they're like “how do you do P.E. when you go to school and get such good grades I don’t understand innit”, they're like that. They understand though, they said to me “yeah, go on carry on doing what you want, just get good grades at the end of GCSEs” (yeah).

B – Did they want you to do any subjects?

J – They go just do what you can do, get the best grades you can (yeah), hopefully stay on for Sixth Form and that's it.

B – Umm, with the advice that your parents gave you, what did you think of that?

J – Well the advice they gave me is like, in two years I've been getting advice and lectures non-stop through one ear and going out the other basically (yeah), its doing my head in.

B – So do you think they're giving you too much advice?

J – Yeah, they giving me too much but now it's like (.), now its all gone quite now (yeah). My mum, she is like "if we need to tell him something, we'll tell him now innit (yeah), if he's doing sumin' wrong then we'll tell him but if not, otherwise just leave him, just tell him to study every now and then" and that's it.

B – And how do you find that?

J – That I find better (yeah). Its like you know when you go home (.), if my dad comes in at the same time I come in its like, I'll start watching tv for a couple of hours and he's like "you don't do no work, don't do this, don't do that", "Dad I've just been to school for six hours yeah and you just want me to come home and start doing another six hours of it?" (yeah), "Nah, that's not a good thing, that's *school work* innit you gotta do homework as well innit", "But *yeah*, if I can't be bothered to do it, I ain't gonna do it now am I (yeah), you can't force me to do it, you can't give me all these lectures to get you know me annoyed and then make me do it (yeah), so I ain't gonna do anything anyway innit, cos you've pissed me off". And then uhh, my mum said she's like you know "just go out, go David Lloyds if you want innit, go an' do a bit of training", so I just do training for a bit (mm), and that's it.

B – What about your tutor gave you?

J – She gave me good advice innit but like (.), cos there's you, about a month, two months (.), 'bout a month and a half back I got a kicked out (mm)

and uhh (.) you know, I came back to school about two weeks later and erm (.), its like I was on a contract then innit. I had to come into school at about 8.40 and that and be in reception at 9 (mm), I had to be in reception at 3.25 exactly, everyday innit, had to clock in, had to clock out so and then I had to get someone to pick me up, someone to drop me off. In the morning, in ever used to wake up, cos then I wasn't used to that routine innit (yeah) so I've had three weeks of school innit (yeah), I was out every night, just going out here, going out there innit. In the mornings I'd be asleep innit or working at my uncle's shop. But basically I wasn't used to the routine, waking up at 8 o'clock in the morning, getting ready for school innit (yeah) so in the last two, three weeks I been coming in 9,10, 11 o'clock s'like that (yeah), couldn't be bothered.

B – What did your tutor say about that?

J – She is like you know what, at the moment, she goes "I don't really care, you got two weeks left you can do what you want basically but just revise" and that's what she's saying.

B – What do you think of your tutor?

J – She's quite safe. She gives me advice, she backs me up a lot of things, and she understands the wass going on in the (.), between me and other people she understands a lot of things innit (yeah). If you think about it, cos once I had a *fight* (.). I was umm (.), I came in school late and I was a bit (.)

buzzing sort of thing (yeah), it's like time ago (yeah) and uhh, back in those days, that's when I used to get kicked out quite often innit (mm) and its like, it wasn't even my fault really innit, but then it become my fault cos I'd lose a temper first innit. But then I used to go out, used to be free you know, I had a good ten weeks extra off, actually hanging out with the older lot and doing that, going out selling it, everything like that innit (mm), and I found out from someone that the five O's had been watching and everything and they gonna do 'em *over* so obviously I turned away and said "I ain't gonna do nuttin'" and they just went "safe" and then a couple days later the five O's had grabbed him innit (mm), *raided his house*, everything innit, luckily I got outta that innit. And then I came into school buzzing and uhh (.) its like these boys at my uhh classroom, 'bout four five of them, they, couple of them standing outside planning "yeah, yeah we gonna start on him now innit in class and get him kicked out" cos that's what they want me to do innit (yeah) so I'm sitting there playing **bhabi** yeah with the cards (yeah), with Amardeep and Ramandeep and uhh I'm shouting out "pussy, pussy" cos Amandeep's uhh Magic Singh innit (yeah). I'm like you know "he can hide his card, everything innit" (yeah). So I'm sitting there, just you know, shouting out "pussy, pussy" and I'm buzzing on all this so I don't know what I'm saying innit (mm) and then one of the boys come in, his names Inderpal, and he starts giving it "he's calling me a pussy, he's calling me a pussy. Miss I'm gonna do this to him, I'm gonna do that to him", I blatantly looked at Miss and said "*Miss*, I'm playing Phabi yeah, I'm calling Amardeep a pussy and why was he got to say that for?". Cos you know when you see your birds there you don't wanna take *shit* innit (mm) so I just got up then innit, give it "*Come on then,* you know if you wanna start it

then go on". I pushed him one, he got a slap 'round me and then uhh when I went to grab him, he tried to punch me, he punched Miss Gohal in the face and he gave her a bruise or summin'. The I blitz'd him, I put him to the floor and then all his mates joined in as well and there's like five of them, they saying they were stopping it but no they weren't they were basically trying to beat me *as well* innit (yeah) and then cos Miss Gohal came back she grabbed me and pulled me out, then I let him go innit, I thought safe innit. After, I give it "I know where you live, you live on my road anyway, it don't matter to me I come down to your house and kill you innit. Its easy to break your windows, I do anything to you, you can't stop me innit, neither can the five O's, neither can the teachers (mm)". Cos of that mouth, I got kicked out for a week (.). Cos you lose it then innit (yeah) and you start saying stuff that you don't, you know, that you gonna regret afterwards innit (mm). Then I just said it all and then that's it (.), I just got *told* and then I had some like (.) stuff in my bag as well and I didn't want to show it so I gave it to Fine, I give it "Fine just take it", then he did it for me. Then I got kicked out for about a *week* and he only got kicked out for three days (mm) and afterwards my mum went to his house and she found out he was like a long-distance cousin I thought "*nah*, I don't care, I'm still gonna kill him".

B – Okay (.), what do your parents think about you getting into problems and stuff?

J – They know like why I get into problems innit. Its like (.) to me right its like this I (.), I work as well at my uncle's store and uhh (.), I work quite a bit cos I

work on Mondays or Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays innit. And I do all evenings at (.), at five, five to 10 o'clock (mm) and you know I get paid what 20 pound a day so that's like if I work five days I'm getting' paid about a 100 pound innit (mm) so you know (.) end the week I go out and have a session innit or something (mm), go *out wi*' my *mates*, that's what I do innit. They know what its like innit cos I spend all my money, I don't really care innit (mm). I go out, I spend money on everyone innit, you know, I'm buying the drinks, it don't matter to me as long as they put money in as well innit (yeah). Thing is, thing with me is you know, when it gets to those machines and stuff innit I start spending quite a bit innit and then I thought "yeah, safe". I go home sometimes like three pound in my pocket innit (yeah) and then she like "Where's your, where's your money gone innit?" I give it "I gave it to Chachi innit", she safe and that, she's like all safe. *She finds out* the next day though innit that I didn't give any money (yeah) and umm (.) she don't say nuttin' to me really cos, cos I spend all my cash she was pissed off yeah cos reason I got kicked out was cos someone was trying sumin' with me and I ended up hitting him first, got kicked out. Second time (.), same thing happened again. Third time, uhh we got caught smoking uhh gear (yeah), back of the school, like about ten of us and umm (.), basically you know what, I blatantly said to the teacher yeah, she goes "you know just tell us who brought the gear in", I go "Look I brought the gear in", and my mate was like he brought the rizla in. They wouldn't believe me! They give it "you didn't bring the gear in" and they give it "tell us who brought it in", and I'm like, I'm sitting there saying "I swear on my mum's life I brought the stuff in" (yeah) and they wouldn't believe me, they didn't wanna back me up for some

reason. I dunno if God was looking down at me or not so I give it to them “alright then it was him” haha and then he gives it “Yeah it was me and what” inni. He gives it “oh I'm a drug addict, I smoke gear and what innit. Them lot want to join me so its not my fault now innit” (mm). Two days later she let me back in again innit but my mum, she obviously found out that I’d done gear innit and since that day I ain't touched it (yeah) and that was like ten months ago now. After that I just been kicked out for no reason. Always a problem with someone, this and that (.). She's like (.), she knows no matter what I'm like innit, but the last time I'm kicked out was cos uhh my ex-girlfriend Kam, you know here don’t you (Kamaldeep, yeah), when we used to come to the thing yeah. Basically erm some uhh chinesey boy, he called her a hoe for no reason (yeah) for telling the truth to the teacher and uhh then he gives it “What you gonna do go and get Jaswinder on me?” so I was like “alright, safe innit”. So, so I took a day of school once, actually I didn’t take a day off, I was in school and I was like pissed off and everything. It’s a new bloke that came there whose name is Azama yeah, really big, black hard nut (mm), thinks he's a bad man. So he comes up to me after school and he starts uhh pushing me saying “look if you fucking say anything to anyone, bring your mans in, I'm gonna come and kill you afterwards innit”. So I'm just standing there laughing in his face and he kept pushing me and you know what I mean, I'm just getting there to lose my temper then ill fight back innit but I didn’t do anything cos my mates pushed me back and said “leave it, leave it innit”. I made one phone call then I had about three [inaudible] in the pub car park across the road. Then uhh (.) one of my cousins walks out and he starts talking to the Chinese bloke, trying to sort things out and then some I dunno,

they were like *Kosovos* (mm), and they helped out the Chinese bloke cos they know him (mm), so they started pulling out two inch knives and stuff and I started laughing innit. My next door neighbour used to live with me, he lived with me for *15 years*, basically it's a whole Muslim family right and then (mm), the middle one, I mean basically he's coke addict and he's been that, he's been one of the known gangsters down Southall, and the younger one, he's really safe, he's more into fast cars and stuff, and the older one is into motorbikes. The *younger one*, he's pretty big and that, he's about 30 now innit, he came out thinking I was in trouble and he gives it to me "what's the matter?", I give it "my man's pulling out a two inch knife on me" so he walks back into the flat, even though he's got a wife and he's got a little kid (mm), yeah he took that responsibility. *He* brought out a *machete* (yeah), and you know like "No ones gonna mess with my little brother", I've known him 15 years now since I was born. Then you hear the five O's coming right, a couple of vans come, he goes back inside and puts it away. Then he calls up his brother and he goes come down Cranford lane, about five, six of those Kosovos go and one of them is walking the Chinese bloke up to school. Slips in give him a few beats and he was crying innit (mm), yeah, we thought 'low it he's on his own innit, there 'bout ten of us innit (mm). Then obviously the police found out, they, they thought it was *me*. Right, basically whatever happens outside school has got nothing to do with school has it (mm)? And they give it "yeah but the situation started in school and now its ended up outside school and you're to blame for it yeah", and they kicked me out for that. They give it "we don't want you back in school, I can take you out for up to 40 days and that's up to your exams innit (yeah)". I said "safe innit, I ain't

bothered, I'll get him outside school now innit, it don't matter to me". But then thing was I came in the next day and the uhh Black boy came and started on me and everyone was like "Ajay, don't worry, if he starts on you, *fucking* just hit him back and we'll all join in innit" (yeah). My mate Ricky, he brought in a knuckle-duster, he goes "what happens, I'm gonna smash his teeth out" (yeah), alright safe. I walk up, everyone walks out, we're standing like about 20 of us and then he walks up with about 30 boys and we was like "you started on him, what's your problem, why *don't you start on me*, you scared of me or summin'?". I started laughing innit you know cos I ain't really scared of anyone I ain't got that fear in my heart and he gives it to me "You scared of me or summin'?", "No I ain't scared a you", so he pushes me. I thought alright safe. *My reaction* yeah would've ended up 40 mans having a fight (yeah). I thought I might as well do it innit so I pushed him back and so did Ricky with the knuckle-duster, it missed him by an inch otherwise he woulda had broken teeth by now and everyone just starts fighting and I get pulled out by my mates innit and then straight after that I go for a couple of snouts cos I was obviously you know hit by someone in the head, come back to school and that's it, I'm kicked out, three weeks. I go "safe innit, I don't care". I mean the man came up to me and pushed me first innit (yeah), and you know you kick him out for what, a couple of days? I go home about one o'clock and then I make us a couple of phone calls and then I got all my cousins sitting in the car park again. We grabbed the black guy right and then you should have, basically he was about to piss in his pants (yeah). Couple of cars going past us saying "Look, is it alright, is it a racist thing now is it?" cos there's like 20 *Indians* standing there and one black man innit (yeah) and a couple of other

black people come out, Somalians, and they're like one of his mates's dad, and he starts giving it "is there a problem?", my cousins obviously 21, 22 and he's like "You know what, you might as well shut the *fuck up* and that as well otherwise I'll beat you as well innit" (mm) and then they obviously walked back in and (.), you get the police coming innit and everyone just went innit, made him aplogise to me. Since that day he hasn't said anything to me. Then they put me back in school now, and no one's said nuttin' and at the same time I broke up with Kamaldeep haha (haha). I go through all of that just cos of her and then I get over and done with cos she thinks I cheated on her. Lame man I swear!

B – Haha, sorry man get back to the thing. With your umm, with what you're planning to do next year, have you thought about what you might do if you don't get the grades?

J – Well basically (.) umm my dad's sort of like I dunno, he used to *work* for someone yeah and basically that shop, would, all the profit in that shop wouldn't go to him and he'd just be getting paid normal wages like two, three hundred pounds a week (yeah). That's *nothing innit* for a family with you know mum, dad and three boys innit (yeah) you know, one's gone 18 now and he wants to start getting' driving lessons and (yeah) get a car. The 16 one, he's gonna get his provisional, that's me now, I'm gonna get my provisional, I'm gonna start driving now innit and then there's my little one now who, you know, wants to, he's gonna be going to France, he's gonna be doing this, that, you know, he's gonna want *money* for clothes, everything

innit (mm). I'm working innit yeah safe, I'm gonna save up cos I wanna get a really nice car for my self. The older one, you know he's got a little bit of a problem, he doesn't act his age. He's like 18 but his brain don't work at 18 if you know what I mean innit (okay). So he's a bit on the dopey side and basically he can't drive, he *drives*, but he doesn't listen to the instructor and you know he can kill anyone at any time, that's the way he is (yeah). Uhh, so basically (.), what it is is , he's now, my dad now bought a business, he's bought a shop in uhh **Sunningale**, have you heard of that? (yeah). It's a nice posh place and that innit, near Thorpe Park and everything (yeah). He bought a shop there and now he's trying to run it. The two, there's two erm (.) white girls that been working there for the last 10 years, they still work there now for him and uhh, there's him and there's my uncle whose just helping him out for a little while like a month, cos our business it needs a bit of *range* and *stuff* and all this sort of *stuff* you know that needs to be put in cos you know you'll make the profits higher innit (mm). Basically, he's got that now and he, you know earns more than that much a week hopefully. All the profit the shop makes you know he's gonna get all of it cos he's, he's running it on his own. Now, some old man, like uncle and that went up to him and said "you're like the type of person that's determined innit", and such like that and uhh he gives it "you get your business sorted out, you start earning your bucks, in a years time I'll give you my shop as well" and now you know I was talking to my dad, my mum she goes to me like "look, if you do your GCSEs good and you think college is safe innit, if you don't then you're better of going with your dad and working at the (.) shop whatever and then making (mm) your own business in a years time", I said safe, that's my back up plan

innit (yeah). Then I'll take a year out and hopefully after a year they'll let me back in here (yeah). Then I'll come back here, do a bit of study and that, least get through Sixth Form, get some more grades innit (yeah) and then I can go in, if I *can* find a better job otherwise just run that business basically (yeah). That's it.

B – So your parents wouldn't mind you working rather than continuing with your education?

J – Well, they, they'd prefer me carrying on my education but looking at the grades at the moment you know (.), they'll be surprised to see if I get any good marks innit (mm). If I get good grades, safe innit, I'll be happy with that, I'll carry on studying innit. If not, then I'm just gonna carry on working basically.

B – What do you think are the positives and negatives of running your own business?

J – Well, positives are you (.), positives are you gotta have people who like you've known for a *long time* that are determined to work for you and come on time and you know go on time (mm), and like (.), negatives (.) actually positives I'll carry on with its like (.), its like I work in my uncle's store yeah (mm) and that stores quite *big*, and you get customers in there coming in and saying its just like Tescos in there yeah and, its not really all that you know, its got like about (.) five rows yeah and they're really long rows (mm) they're

like about say (.) 40 metres long maybe yeah. According to other people, they're like “yeah, its like Tescos in there (mm), you got good prices, better prices than them, this, that you know”. Its cos, it’s the fact that they got a range of stuff innit, its like they got one lane of 40 metres and there’s a whole range of wines. That's a good selection innit (yeah) you know, people will buy ‘em and then you got special *deals*. If you do all that sort of stuff yeah, then you'll obviously gonna be making a lot of profit aren’t you (mm) and uhh so that's like positive side of the business, you got a whole range of *stuff*, special deals, what not, you know you'll be making more profit. The other side is, negative side is, you basically (.) how you order stuff. If you don’t order your stuff in time (yeah), then you ain't gonna make nuttin’, you got order stuff on the days that you know that, you gotta order a day *before* that you want the stuff innit and if you forget or if anything happens, emergency or anything or if you forget, that's all your profit gone down in a whole week (yeah), you don’t order anything that day and that's the day that everyone comes in for that stuff innit (yeah). Its like milk or summin’ like that innit. If you need all of it for Monday morning, first thing in the morning you gonna have a hundred people walk into your shop and no one buys milk and you ain't making nothing are you (mm). That's it, that's what its like.

B – Do you think there's any chance of racism when running your own business?

J – Nah, not really cos I've worked at uhh (.)my uncles store in Isleworth (mm), never had anyone racist come in there, *never*, and this one I been to,

that my dad just bought (yeah) all of them are so polite (yeah). He always finds a polite area wherever he goes. (.) So I don't think they'll be anyone racist 'round there.

B – Do you think there's any other jobs where there could be racism?

J – Well there are like (.), you know (.), there are other jobs (.), like obviously you'd have particular jobs in areas(.), I don't really think things like that. (.) Not really, don't think so.

B – What about areas, you were talking about areas. do you think some areas are racist?

J – Some, some areas are obviously racist like, you know (.). You go to uhh (.), I dunno erm (.), if you go to uhh Brixton or summin' (mm) say that's more like a Black man area innit, you know then if you walk there with a whole load of Indian boys or summin' and you're having a laugh whatever, enjoying yourself you know. They're obviously gonna think you know "my mans is coming into my areas what not innit (mm) acting like a bad boys" and obviously they gonna start summin' innit. But you got a lot of areas like that though.

B – Do you think that's only in London or //

J – Even 'round London, other parts of the country as well (yeah).

B – What about sexism, do you think there's any sexism in business?

J – In a way, its like uhh good sexism cos like, its like (.) where I'm working at the moment in Isleworth, we don't get the girls to do (.) like uhh the broom or filling up the drinks in the fridges or anything like that (mm). Cos it doesn't look nice innit. You like you want all these young people on the till and filling up maybe sweets, innit (mm), and maybe filling up wines innit. Cos that's what I always do innit when I go there. I'm always like, every weekend that I work on Saturdays, I just sit on the till for seven hours innit, you know seven to eight hours, maybe even ten hours I sit on the till. You enjoy it cos like you know all the customers now innit and you have a talk with them, a laugh with them, what not innit (yeah). When the girls come in then you expect, in a way *I think* its good that the girls do come in and come on the till cos it's a good thing for us, we get a *break*, top of that I can go for a fag when I need one, I can't stay stuck on the till innit all the time (yeah). Cos like my uncles, *one a them* knows I smoke yeah, actually no both of them know I smoke but uhh my *real* uncle he's like, if I say to him "uncle can you help me on the till for a minute I just need to go for a fag" he'll smack me one innit. If I say "can you come to the till I need to go to the toilet innit", he'll go "alright, safe innit" then I go for a fag (yeah). But *I can't just* say Chachu I need a snout innit (mm), I've been on the till for two minutes you know safe, I go outside and I stand outside and have my snout (yeah). That's a good thing though you know 'at, its feel comfortable (yeah). So you can go for a snout whenever you like.

B – You said the girls don't fill up the cupboards and all that. Do you think its because they cant do it or //

J – *No they can do it*. Its just the fact that, it don't look nice, it don't look nice (mm). Even in like, if its like a family business, you don't want your girls you know coming into the shop (.), you know, filling up drinks and that innit. It don't look nice innit (yeah), its like you don't mind *boys* doing it cos like, you know, it's a easy job, it's a easier job for us lot innit to do it cos then you kow we know where everything is what not (yeah). You know the girls would rather just stand the till, do the till innit (mm).

B – Your uncle who runs the shop, does he ever offer you any advice?

J – He basically, what he, he's offered me a lot of advice, he's given me *so much* advice. But basically he said to me now, well he said to my gran cos he lives with his wife, daughter, and his mum, what he said to them was he goes "cos of his exams I'm not saying anything like about *smoking* or *drinking* or whatever he's doing (mm), but as soon as his exams finish, that's the day *I'm gonna* take control of his life then I'm gonna give him a job, I'm gonna give him this and I'm gonna give him that, even though he'll be getting paid a lot" (mm). So basically, in a way, my family are s'pporting me quite a lot(mm), that's what I like innit but then you know I don't like the *lectures*. Cos then if my dad lectures me whatever and shouts at me, I don't, I don't speak back innit cos its disrespect cos its *your dad* innit (yeah). I just sit their quiet and I'm just like, if I get pissed off I walk out I go into the garage and I start

pumping up some music innit whatever. And then if my uncle screws at me, I don’t find it bad, I just say safe innit, you know, you’re alright and that's safe innit. I never shout back at them two or say anything back to them two innit that's one thing I've got respect in the family about as well innit (mm). But I'm, mums they take everything innit you know. When you're pissed off what not and you know you’ve done summin’, your mum comes in, and your mum’s like “Khi hoya” and then she starts doing your head in innit (mm) and you just screw at her and then she's like “that's a nice way to talk to your mum innit”, and then you're like “sorry mum”. Its just like that basically innit (yeah).

B – Erm (.), have you thought about any alternatives that you could do apart from running your own business?

J – Well (.) I think my uhh new girlfriend and that, she's told me to do the apprenticeship, everything (yeah). She gives it “if you don’t get your grades that you want, you can do apprenticeship and get some uhh things for English and stuff like that (yeah), so then later on at least you can get a good job that you'll be doing from you know eight, nine o’clock till three, four o’clock innit (mm) and it'll be better for you”. I basically like, at the moment I don’t really know what that means (mm). Getting a apprenticeship or whatever. But then you know, end of the day I just want a nice easy job innit. I'm thinking about working at David Lloyds as well innit cos you can make quite a lot of money, cos one person, yearly, its costs them uhh (.) at least a grand and a half for a year’s umm working out there innit (yeah) for, for the card uhh membership for a year and a, for a year they charge you about one

and a half grand depending on your age if you're older, they charge you *two grand* summin' like *that* (yeah). That's a good thing innit cos they get *loads* of people coming there, you make bare profit and obviously you're gonna get paid *more* now aren't you you know(yeah). Instead of getting paid four, five and hour you'll be getting' six, seven and hour and that'll be even better (mm). And the *hours you* work there, they're quite good as well, they open up at 10, they close at 11 or 12. That's a good thing innit, I can work 10 hours a day don't matter to me.

B – You walked about wanting a nice, easy job. What would be you're a nice, easy job for you then?

J – (.) You know at the moment, I don't, I ain't really even thought 'bout having a job or anything like that (yeah). All I thought about is let my GCSEs come through and then I'll *sit down* with the careers advisors or sit down with the *family* then I'll decide what I wanna to do then innit (yeah). At the moment, I don't really care.

B – Would you sit down with both sets of people, your family and the careers advisors?

J – Yeah.

B – With uhh running your own business, do you think that's realistic?

J – I think that it is yeah (yeah). I think if I set my brain to carry on doing business yeah, business studies here (yeah) uhh even though I don't come, if I stop coming to this school or whatever, and umm I can still get, cos I know teachers that used to come to this school and they come to my shop now and I could get them, they said to me "you ever need any help or what not ill come and teach you innit (mm), just *shout*". So you know I could ask them for advice and I could ask them for teaching in business *studies*, [inaudible]. So I'll get more in to business studies and then you know as soon as I got to the max point where I know I can you know figure out how to run a business, lay it all out, then I can *do it* (yeah). As long as erm I tell my parents what I want then they'll s'port me innit (yeah). And my mum said already, I'll s'port you anyway so long, so long as you stop smoking (he sighs) (haha).

B – Do you think there's any advantages with being a Sikh with like studying and working as well?

J – Well (.), I dunno if you go into a Indian shop you know, down High Street or summin' jus so you, (.) any shop you know and basically the manager's *Indian* yeah. *You could be* related to him in any way you never no innit (yeah) you know what Indians are like innit these days. If you go down to a shop and you say yeah, its like when I you know wanna work for them, its nuttin' to d with you're Indian or anything its just basically they look at your record and they look at the way you are and then they decide from that innit (mm). They don't say "oh he's Indian, we'll have him working for ask". (.) That's basically what its like innit. *Our shop*, cos it's a family business, we don't have anyone

you know of a different colour working there otherwise if it weren't a family business we'd have people working there (yeah), quite often.

B – Do you think being a Sikh helps you to study or anything like that?

J – Nah (.), well if you were that religious type and you were going to the gurdwara and you, you know, stayed there a couple of hours a day what not then may be you know you'd study more and everything innit, you'd get it into your brain innit (mm), you know you need to do study to get good grades innit and maybe you know God might help you if you go to the gurdwara everyday what not but then (.), I ain't go that thing innit cos like I've had all this trouble and what not before innit. I used to go to the gurdwara quite a lot, when I used to believe in god. Went to India once and erm, you know you get that erm what's his name, Sai Baba (mm), someone that was related, someone that was really close to him, and he's like uhh pandit sort of type, and he*'d*, cos, cos they when they give, they give us a house to stay in, and basically they give it to us "wake up at *four in the morning*, do **puja, pat** what not 'til *six* in the morning (yeah) and then go to sleep, wake up again at *10 o'clock,* do **puja, pat** what not 'til later" and, you know I was young then innit, I was like "oh god, you know what I mean, this is lame innit" (mm), I wasn't into any of that innit, my *dad* was innit so obviously you know if he was into it then I'd have to go along with him innit (mm). It used to be long yeah, he used to believe in all of it and look at me innit now. I got into *drugs*, smoking, alcohol, what not and you know he used to believe in god so much but at the moment, you know safe, I believe in god just without you know believing that

he helps out time, but not really, I don't really believe in him (yeah) cos I been through so much shit yeah and he's never been there innit (mm) know what I mean. Okay maybe every now and then you know he's helped me out in major troubles and that, like you know like getting caught on drugs, what not innit (yeah) and I don't know how they find out but they find out innit. Other than that you know, always getting' kicked out of school what not, you know, girls, everything he's just doing your head in innit (yeah), smoking, drinking (.), its just all cos of that you know, I don't believe in god basically.

B – Alright, umm (.) you talk about your parents a bit. You said they don't mind the choices you made, have you had many discussions with them?

J – Not really, I've had couple with my mum but my dad basically, he knows where I'm at, what I got innit and he goes to me you know "I don't really fancy you working for the rest of your life in a shop (mm) but you know if it comes down to that you know I'll get you started into it", but then he goes to me uhh you know those letting business you get you know in houses where you basically sit there (mm) and umm you *buy* a house (.) or like property and uhh you put it up saying to let, what number what not (okay) and then basically selling boards up saying yeah look I wanna this property to for this many people (yeah) and they obviously giving you the money, cos you're basically making the profit. Wanna get a couple of properties, he goes you can get into that, cos you're basically sitting down on a computer and a phone next you and that's all you gonna be doing innit when you leave you gonna be earning good money and that (mm). That's a good idea as well

innit, learn more about business so obviously I'd do that innit rather than just live the life of a shopkeeper.

B – When they've given you advice, is it always the same or does it differ?

J – It differs, *a lot*.

B – In what ways?

J – Oh, sometime they're like you know (.) you're gonna be like this, "you're gonna be like that if you don't get your *grades" blah, blah, blah* innit (yeah). Sometimes its like you know (.) "I can't believe how you've changed in the last year or so, what about, you know you drink, you smoke, go out at night, its this that", and I'm like, I'll be, I'll be home at one o'clock, two o'clock, there's nuttin' wrong with that innit (mm). But then they gotta work in the morning innit and my mum stays up to see what state I'm in innit when I get home (okay) (.). And there's some lectures like, and there's like lectures like you know, "we'll help you out *now*, we know where you're at, we know what you can do so we'll support you all the way in everything innit" (yeah), lectures like that basically all the time.

B – Do your mum and dad say things which are ever different when they offer you advice?

J – They just say the same things for advice, they just say it in a different way.

B – Okay, what like aspirations do they have for you?

J – What do you mean by aspirations?

B – Like uhh what they hope you to do and become?

J – Well they were hoping me to umm do my GCSEs because, go to college, go to university (mm), Sixth Form and university umm (.) basically come out with some good degrees and everything innit (yeah) and they *hoped* cos basically they were in India yeah when they were doing their stuff. They got *excellent grades* everything innit you know what I mean but when they came *here*, it mean *shit innit* (mm). This is England innit, not in India innit (yeah). It mean *shit*, my dad used to be excellent at *sports*, bhangra, everything you know, he used to kill it. But then you know when you come here, its England and you got to start (.) washing **phandey** in those days innit (mm) to come up to where you are now innit. And umm (.) they, they hoped for me to go and get a degree, they wanted me cos they couldn't do it, they done it in India but not *here* (yeah). You know they wanted me to do a degree here. But then you know (.) that's like a one in a million chance of me *doing* that (.), but you know if they really want me to do that then I'll try innit (mm), *if I* get good grades now, I'm hopefully tryin gto revise now for the next four weeks, do my

GCSEs, carry on at college and then hopefully if I get what I need in college, what do you need, something like five A to Cs do you or six?

B – You can get really a range of grades depending on the course, so you can get D's and E's and get in as // well.

J – But then you won't get in a good university will you?

B – Maybe not yeah.

J – You need good A levels to get into a really good university now and that's another thing innit.

B – Umm, have they had any problems or difficulties with your choices?

J – No, not really. They're not really bothered, they give it "look, what you wanna do you do innit (mm) and its your life, how you wanna live it basically" (yeah) and that's it.

B – So have they pushed you to go to university at all?

J – Nah they don't, you know you have like *uhh* emotional conversation, in like the emotional conversation we've talked about university innit (yeah). And like my whole family is like "yeah, I hope my son goes to uni, what not" you know, but I've let them down, you know you let them down innit if you

don’t go innit (yeah) so obviously you think to yourself “come on, my poor family, at least make them happy innit”, you know go out and do it innit (yeah) so that's why I was thinking about it as well.

B – So do you hope to go to university?

J – Hopefully you know one day cos everyone says you know “uni’s this, uni’s that, you know uni’s the lick”, my cousin goes to me “come down to my uni, see how it is innit” he goes to uni in Nottingham but he lives in Leicester (okay) and umm he goes “come down innit, you see how it is what not, you know, don’t worry ‘bout you know (.), just get what you can in your GCSEs, and carry on doing college you know least by looking at your GCSEs, by looking at your records a university can say you’ve made an effort by carrying on and studying what not innit” (yeah), he gives it “if you shouldn’t get accepted in something and that you know then you come down here innit, you know you trust me and that big time and what not so safe” (yeah).

B – With your parents, where do you think they get the information about doing things in the future and going to university and you know running your // own business?

J – That's basically from their own experiences. Yeah that's what they’ll say to me cos they give it “look we couldn’t do it (mm), we didn’t get all the happiness you're getting’ now, you know we were in India”, and you know India was like yeah fine everything innit you know like (.), girls, girls and boys

they couldn't meet each *other* (yeah) know what I mean. All that stuff innit, and boys couldn't say nuttin' to the *girls* (yeah), you know what I mean, then they got married what not then they came here. And when they got married and they came here they were obviously *working* innit 24/7 (mm) so they didn't get time to go anywhere, do anything innit so they were like you know, my *dad* got his time to have his fun cos he used to like fast cars (mm). You know he used to get well a good five, six cars a month right and just smash 'em innit, he used to work for someone who just used to give it "go and take this down to some waste place, car pound and you know (.) break it innit, whatever". He used to speed it down, smashing it everywhere, just enjoying himself innit you know. But now he's calmed down a lot, he used to buy *cars* a lot (yeah) he used to have that thing and now, there's this *one car* he wants to get, but I want that for my self, I'm gonna get that car!

B – Do they ever like talk to other relatives about what you can do or to any teachers?

J – They talk to my uhh, well my dad, my dad, my dad, my mum talks to my dad's sister innit like my Bhua [aunt – father's sister] innit, she talk to like the oldest one cos *she's* sort of uhh likes me quite a lot and she understands what I been through and everything (yeah) and she talks to her quite a bit about things innit and uhh, sometimes they come down and give me more lecture and that innit from Leicester but then you know I obviously have to listen to them innit cos I don't stay there for couple of weeks every now and then as well innit (yeah). So I gotta stay in the rules innit otherwise you know,

no one's gonna like me then innit if I don't listen to what they say (mm). Its alright.

B – What do you think about the advice they give you?

J – Advice they give is me fine but they give it to me at the wrong time. Its like I come back from school everyday (.) and just say they come over on a Friday night you know, Ccome over, enjoy yourself, hello what not, make it happy let us spend time with our little cousin brothers and everything. I haven't, I haven't seen 'em for quite a few long time now innit cos of the way, school and this and that innit (yeah). They all in college and uni and everything but I wanna go see them, its just a busy time at the moment innit (mm). Other than that they always give you a lecture at a wrong, its like I have to leave at night to go sleep over at my grans cos "they're like good boy, whatever what not", I'm just like "god, just *fuck off*" (haha).

B – Erm (.), we'll talk a bit about your teachers now. What sort of arrangements have they like provided for giving you information about career and education advice?

J – Basically teachers ain't done nuttin' for me yeah (mm) but (.) Mr Peters' done quite a lot to keep me in school and uhh I rate him for that cos basically I been you know kicked out a few times now. They always had one of those little (.) *dumb ass* meetings they do innit with the whole school and the teachers and see how *I am* in my lessons (yeah). I'm fine in my lessons innit,

I ain't got problems with *any* teachers innit, so obviously teachers gonna back me up as well innit say “he's fine in my lesson” innit (mm). Cos its always Mr Peters’ word that comes down to, he's the head of the year, he gets all the information so he always backs me up, says “yeah, Jaswinder’s a good student, but you know sometimes you know he loses his temper but that's now his fault that's *other* students for winding him up”. But when it comes down to meeting the governors, the first time I had to meet the governors was like a month ago innit (yeah), its like I had Mr Masters, Miss Walton and (.) couple a others taking *my* side against the governors saying “look, you know, this boys been in this school for so long, he's tried to keep out of trouble for all this time, he gets winded up a couple of times, but he's had a good life what not, he's been a good student, he's got so many awards, he's doing his GCSEs now so at least he's going school”. The governors are like “we need something solid to keep him in school otherwise we gonna kick him out *now*” (mm), and then you know the governors thought about it, they give it “look, if you can arrange this timing for him, arrange that timing for him, arrange teachers to meet him, arrange to talk to him”, I said “safe”, signed the contract whatever innit you know, I don’t give a shit as long as I'm in school innit (mm). It’s *alright for me* cos then you know I'm not used to waking up in the mornings so I got my Chachi phoning me fucking eight o’clock to eight thirty in the morning, waking me up saying “I’ll be at your house in 10 minutes, wake up innit”. Then I got my mum phoning me like in the morning, I got my *dad* phoning me in the morning “*you awake now?*” and I was like “yeah man, leave me alone innit” haha (haha).

B – Have you talked a lot to the teachers then?

J – I confide in Mr Peters, Mr Peters and that's it.

B – What about Mrs Jones, she's the other head of year?

J – She's safe, she's alright teacher and that yeah but, when it comes down to situations yeah and they hear, they hear everyone else's side of the story but not mine (mm), its always people shouting at me you know what I mean. I don't like people shouting at me without a reason innit (mm), without a really good reason you know what I mean. If someone comes up to you and *shouts at you* after hearing someone else's side of the story you're obviously gonna get pissed off with that person and you're also gonna get pissed of with the person telling 'em that stuff aren't you (yeah), that's what its like innit, and that's what she does, she *shouts* at me at times innit, and that's why I dislike her. Well, I don't, *dislike* her before innit but now its like you know "hello miss, how are you?", that's alright now innit, its cool(mm). I don't have a dislike of them all but I don't confide in them or anything (yeah), that's all it is. Its only Mr Peters.

B – Have any of the teachers ever spoken to your parents?

J – Mr Peters has, Miss Jones has, and (.) Mr Masters, Ms Brooks and Ms Walton (mm). They've all had words with my mum.

B – Yeah, is it mainly your mum or your dad as well?

J – My dad doesn't come in cos he's uhh, cos he's diabetic, he gets high blood pressure and if he comes in and he's got all this *fucking headache*, left, right and centre (yeah) from teachers. But obviously you know my dad's gonna get high blood pressure and anything can happen then so my mum says to him "you're best of staying at home innit, than not go and see him innit" (yeah) and that's it.

B – What do your parents think about what the teachers tell them?

J – My mum thinks (.), well basically parents think you know teachers are telling you right. They go you know the, from (.) eight to four or eight thirty to four, three thirty innit, the teachers are like basically your parents, they just teaching you innit and uhh just listen to them innit (yeah), do what they say, that's it, that's what they say to me.

B – Have you ever talked to the careers teacher at all?

J – I've spoken to one careers teacher, she goes to me "when you done your GCSEs gimme a shout and we'll talk properly".

B – So have they offered you any advice?

J – They've offered me advice but I don't really want it at the moment cos basically I don't really know what I want later on in life innit (yeah). When I done my GCSEs, I'm gonna come to her innit.

B – Have you tried to look up any information by yourself?

J – Advice I've had from *uncles, cousins* you know, relatives everything innit they've all given me advice so there's no point in me going to find more advice innit I might as well just get people that know about it (yeah).

B – You get a lot of advice from relatives, which relatives do you find the advice comes better from?

J – The younger ones. Like my Chacha [dad's younger brother] yeah (mm) (.), lately he's gone about 32 now but he still looks like about 25 (yeah) and his advice is good cos he knows what its like these days innit (yeah) you know. He knows once you get involved in drugs, smoking and drinking its really hard to get out innit (mm) so he encourages when he knows I'm in a happy mood innit, and if he knows I'm in a pissed off mood he'll say "what's the matter, wanna chat to me about it" (mm). My parents, they don't *ask* me when I'm in a pissed off mood innit, they just leave me alone innit. If someone says summin' about me innit or I get into a fight, it's the same with my cousins, I chat to 'em everyday on the phone now and they're like "come out innit, go play some pool, have something to drink" and I'm like "nah, I ain't in the mood innit" then I tell 'em my problem and they're like "think about a

day when you wanna go down to the school, we'll go down and beat the bastard up innit" (mm). Its nuttin' to them cos they basically lived their young lives now innit (yeah), one's about 21, he's working couple years before he gets married and everything. The other one's 19, still studying at uhh private college in Ealing (mm), other than that you know he's always up for anything really innit.

B – Erm (.), just one final thing. Generally speaking, there's this stereotypical view of Asian parents, that they always want uhh the best for their children even if it's unrealistic. I just want to know what you think about that?

J – What do you mean by that?

B – Like, in this society erm there's just like a general kind of view that Asian parents want the highest things for their children whether // they can get them or not.

J – Yeah I know what you mean now. They, they basically, cos they give you anything innit, basically anything, you should be able to get everything innit. End of the day we give them everything innit (yeah), all our happiness, everything innit. But then, end of the day (.), its not, its not what *you* gonna, its not what you *want* or (.), its like this, whatever direction my brain goes in, it goes in that direction you know, if its right or wrong I'll figure it out myself innit you know and (.) if I *wanna do* summin, you know if my brain want to do it, my hearts saying that I *have* to do then I'll do it innit otherwise I ain't gonna

do it, know what I mean (mm). My parents like, they're quite safe, but obviously they get quite upset at times when I don't do summing innit but then you know, end of the day, *now* they know, you know what they hope for (.) is for the people to give a chance. So if I get it they'll be happy, if I don't they'll still be happy as long as I got summing I can do.

B – But erm don't you find that some Asian parents do push and pressurise they're children?

J – Yeah they do but they don't let you out, they don't let you do this, don't let you do that (mm). But my parents, well my *dad* sort of becoming like that cos of my GCSEs now but my mum's like (.), I do a snidey [be crafty] sometimes innit, "going out for a bit, back in a minute". My dads sitting in the other room having a little glassie and that watching tv (yeah), I just jump out the house and I go do what I need to *do* (yeah), get a phone call half an hour later "where are you?", "I'm just out, be home in half an hour", "where are you?" innit, "just with my cousin, gotta go do a mission and that" (mm), "I want you home in 10 minutes", "Alright, safe".

B – What about with uhh girls, do you think its different for girls?

J – Girls I think, they, they wouldn't even be let outta the hosue. If they've got older brothers its even worse (yeah).

B – Why do you think that is?

J – Girls are just, its just Indian thing you know you don't want your respect going down you know (yeah). Just say, just say uhh, a bloke for a fact yeah, he got *bare* respect yeah, he been known as the hardest man what not and lovable and everything yeah, then you find out his younger sister's a *hoe* (mm) you know summing like that. She's a slut, she gives this, she's dealing with his mate yeah. That is a *bad reputation* innit (mm), know what I mean. If I was in that position I'd rather kill myself rather than knowing that my sister's a hoe innit (yeah). I mean I know one person whose a, his sisters like one. His sisters even asked me for one, you know if I want any what not. I just turned 'round and laughed at her innit (yeah), I give it "your older brother yeah he's 19 what not, he's massive and he's my mate", I'm not exactly gonna do things behind his back now am I (yeah) and obviously I told him what she said to me innit and he goes "alright, safe, cheers for telling me what not innit" and he screwed at his sister, since that day she ain't spoken to me.

B – Just another thing, do you think its different for girls when choosing what they want to do in the future?

J – Nah, parents support girls equally.

B – Okay, that's about it, is there anything you wanna add before we finish?

J – Nah, that's it basically.

B – Is there anything you wanna ask me before we finish?

J – Nah, that it.

B – Okay, thanks.